



# Invited

## LENT 2021

## Episode One: Love

### Introduction

Hello, and thank you for downloading the resources for *Invited* – the diocesan Mission brought to you by the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

The Mission is being hosted to help you grow in faith, and to dive deeper into some of the more basic teachings of the Church that we sometimes take for granted. It is called *Invited* because that is what we are. **We are Invited to be God's beloved sons and daughters. We are Invited to be members of his body, the Church, here on earth. We are Invited to follow Jesus in everything we do and to know him as a brother and friend.**

The following resources can be used to supplement the filmed episodes being hosted on our [website](#), and the diocesan conversations that are taking place on Thursday evenings via Zoom. They can also be used independently.

This document is divided into two halves. The first half is a breakdown of the Episode One film, including transcripts of the guest speaker and the person giving testimony. You will be able to access the prayer and reflections that are posed at the end of the film, which enable you to explore this content in a more personal way.

The second section supports Thursday evening's follow-up conversation on Zoom.

You are welcome to join our Thursday evening group meetings, they start at 7.30pm and finish at 8.45pm. We are delighted that people are also meeting in parish groups, family groups and prayer groups - there are even groups in other countries! If you prefer not to join a group, you can use these resources to help you reflect on your own - or with a friend over the phone. The questions and reflections provided in the second half of this document will aid these conversations.

We hope that you find *Invited* a really helpful way to prepare this Lent. If you have had a difficult year, as so many people have, we hope that the programme will help to nourish and restore you. No matter how dark things get... the light of Christ can, and will, bring us comfort, peace and hope for the future.

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# Episode One transcript

## Guest speaker: David Wells

My name is David Wells, and I want to say a big thank you to Arundel and Brighton Diocese for inviting me to be part of your Lenten mission. I hope you enjoy these 15 minutes exploring one of the most fundamental questions of our lives.

But before that, just a special thank you to Lizzie, to Deacon Jon and to Katherine, who have invited me to contribute, and who have helped me in the preparation of this short video.

So, let's today, explore this theme of love.

The Church teaches that we were made for love, that love created us, that love is our destiny, that we are to live and dwell in love and that love is what we're for.

But it's amazing how difficult that is to grasp, and what it even means, and it's even harder to talk about it. I mean we don't talk that much about the really important stuff. But are we restless for love?

St Augustine taught famously that we're sort of born with an innate kind of restlessness, that can only be settled, only be fulfilled when we meet the love of God. That somehow God made us to be, or to receive, God's love. And that until we do that, we're kind of roaming the world looking for it.

There's a beautiful story about the search for love. It's a Spanish story about Paco, the little boy who becomes a difficult teenager and then leaves his father and runs away, much to the despair and the anguish of his parents, who for weeks and weeks search the city streets looking for their beloved Paco. Until one day having given up every means of finding the boy his father finally puts a notice in the market square – Paco, my beloved son – I love you – you are forgiven – please come home. If you read this, I will be here tomorrow night at 7pm. Please come home.

And the next night, the father arrives at the marketplace to find an entire market square, full of young men called Paco. Somehow, we all want to be loved properly, into fullness.

The thing is, it's not that easy is it. It's not simple to understand this. Let's start at the beginning. Let's start with our childhoods.

You were probably lucky enough to have parents who loved you. And if you were, you began life, beginning to recognize that some kinds of behaviour, some kinds of responses merited delight in the people you loved. And so, you learned how to please them. You know, most children kind of learn through the love of their parents what's right and what's wrong, and it isn't long before – if we laugh at this, if we behave properly, if we say the right

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things, if we say them in the right way, if we behave well - then maybe our parents will love us more. And it's not the intention of our parents often but it wasn't long before we learned that if we behaved in a certain way we probably got treated better and somehow things were happier.

So, by the time we're 10 years old we've probably learned that love is something you have to work for, to earn, to please in others.

And then of course we hit adolescence, and that's terrifying, because then we go out looking for love, beyond our own houses, beyond our own families into the great big wild world itself.

You'd be very lucky if you got to adulthood, without at least being bruised, sometimes damaged, sometimes deeply wounded by the search for love.

And so, then something else happens. Quite a frightening thing. We begin to retreat from love itself. The way the scriptures put it in the Psalms, in the Gospels and in the letters of St Paul - they all write about the risk of hardening our hearts. Oh, my goodness, it's very tempting to build up a wall of self-defence, so that by the time we are 21 firstly we're struggling to earn love and at the same time, we're scared of it. I mean, it makes us vulnerable and who wants to be hurt twice.

So, it isn't long before you build up a brick wall around yourself and that would be very human.

But then another risk happens, and Pope Francis writes a lot about this. He says, once you build up those walls you become a slave to the walls themselves, we become self-disposed, self-reliant, and then we become self-indulgent and if we're not careful we can become self-pitying.

In fact, there's a horrible version of me that I don't like, that's all about me. We become small minded; we shrink into ourselves.

And that is another definition really of sin.

It's not so much that we're bad, it's that we're ill, that we're self-disposed, preoccupied by ourselves. And we learn slowly to mistrust love, to avoid the pain of love itself. To love badly.

St Paul describes the torment beautifully. In his letter to the Romans in chapter 7 he says it's amazing. He writes like this, he says, I have the desire to do what's good. You know, I want to be loving. And I want to love. And I want to be loved. But I can't do it. Because I'm rubbish at it.

He doesn't write it like that he just says, I can't carry that out for I don't do the good I want to do and the evil that I don't want to do, I keep doing that.

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Oh, does that sound a bit like us - that somehow you go - look, I don't want to be locked inside myself, I don't want the whole world to be like me. I don't want my world only to extend to the end of my own face.

But sometimes it's easier to just build up a wall, to not allow ourselves to be loved for fear of losing that love and at the same time, not to be very loving ourselves - that definition of sin Pope Francis gives us - we shrink into ourselves and we become small minded. And then we do the biggest damage of all, which is we begin to think that we don't deserve love.

And that's a really frightening place to be.

When you finally give up on yourself, and you decide that somehow, you're not worthy of love anyway, because you're no good at it.

So, look, I've described a pretty bleak place there. We feel we have to earn love, then we try and then we experiment and get hurt. Then we shrink into ourselves and we build walls around ourselves and then we think we just not very good at it.

There's a lot of people out there like that, and all of us can suffer from that from time to time. I can only give you this talk, because I've been there, and perhaps from time to time I'll go there again.

But then, but then, but then! We get the good news. What is the good news?

St Paul writes it like this fabulously! He says, from sure that neither death nor life, no angel, no ruler, no things that are present now or, things to come, no power, no height or depth. Nothing else in creation on the planet will be able to separate us from the love of Christ Jesus.

Nothing. Nothing can do that if you don't let it.

Now here's the thing, I think this is almost impossible to grasp; nothing we can do, nothing we can do will make God love us less. You don't have to earn God's love. Like sometimes we felt we did. You don't have to earn it. God won't love you more if you go to church.

I know! What?

And here's another thing is just as radical, nothing you can do is going to make God love you less nothing you can do is going to make God love you more.

I mean, what, what? I thought I had to be good. I thought I had to be perfect. I thought I thought but I don't! What? I don't have to earn it?

The church calls it gratuitous love. It's free!

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I know, nobody loves us like that, or even if they try, they can't keep it up.

Subtly sometimes we do manipulate each other a little bit, we twist things and try and work things.

This is a little carving [shows a small statue of a person lovingly holding a child in the air]. I'm very proud of this. I used to give a talk about how I'd throw my children up in the air, and in the room was an artist who carved a statue after I'd given the talk. Isn't that beautiful, it's just made from wood, it's a gorgeous little piece.

I remember this statue reminds me of when my eldest son was born. He was a few minutes old and I had the privilege of giving him to his mother. And I remember looking at him. This little baby. And I remember looking at him and thinking, I love you and I have no reason to. You've just bruised my wife, exhausted us both, you certainly haven't pleased us, but I look at you and I love you.

But then I had a bigger thought which I'm so grateful for, which was this. If God loves me the way I love that little baby I'm going to be all right.

Because God's love isn't dependent on me. It's not about me, it's about God. God is that good. The good news of Jesus Christ is there's nothing you can do that will make God love you more. You are loved.

Pope Francis writes it like this. He says God's love for people is stronger than a mother's love for her children. God's love for people is stronger than a bridegroom's love for his bride. God's love for his people will be victorious over the worst infidelities. In other words, this is a love that you can't separate yourself from.

I love that.

in Laudato Si another one of Pope Francis's documents he goes on to say, everyone is willed by God. Everyone is loved by God and every one of us is necessary. All this self-doubt, this frustration, this am I good enough? Away with that it's not about us. It's about the good news.

Put another way, when asked to sum up the good news of the entire gospel, Pope Francis put it like this, and it's in a lot of these documents he repeats it often and it's fantastic!

Pope Francis writes:

'Jesus Christ loves you. He died to save you. And now he's at your side. Every day, every day to enlighten strengthen and free you.'

That's the message. That's the whole message.

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Archbishop Andre Leonard, the Archbishop of Brussels wrote famously about that piece. He said: 'don't make the mistake of thinking that this is beginner's Christianity. It's the beginning, the middle and the end, it's the whole story. You're loved. A great price has been paid for you. And now it's victory walks at your side, every day, whispering the words of love.'

You go 'Lord I don't know how to do this exam' and you hear the words 'I love you'  
You go 'Lord but what about tomorrow and all the things we've got to get done' and you hear the words 'I love you.'  
'But I'm not feeling too well in this pandemic', you hear the words 'I love you.'

Because God's love doesn't depend on you. It's already there.

And here comes the amazing thing about this statue, it's the thing I love best about it, is that I was probably in my middle age, not a young dad anymore, but a middle-aged man when I first realised that I am not the father in statue. I'm the baby. And that God loves me like that.

Proud of me. Not because I deserve it. Not because I've earned it. Not because I was strong or resilient or successful, not because I passed an exam or failed an exam, not because I did the right thing or did the wrong thing.

God just loves me. Like a daddy loves a baby.

And if he can love me like that. Then I can stop beating myself up and be better at loving others. That's the Gospel.

So, let me finish with the words of Pope Francis, he writes: 'the joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of anybody who encounters the love of Jesus, those who accept that offer are set free from their sin, their sorrow, their inner emptiness and loneliness.'

In the end it's about dignity. So, this Lent, let's begin by thinking a little bit about how well we receive that message.

And if you're feeling today a little bit like - well that's all right for Dave Wells there. But actually, if he knew me, I don't feel God's love and I'm not sure I feel anybody's - this is the time in Lent to say, Lord, open my hardened heart to the fact that, however bad I think I am, you still love me.

And I want to come home, just like Paco.

Thanks for listening and I hope you enjoy the rest of your mission.

# Personal Testimony: Suzy Duxbury

## (Question and answer format)

So, Suzy, you've been very kind and offered to give us your personal testimony, and to talk a little bit about how God's love has worked in your life and helped transform your life and bring about a really profound change.

Q. Tell us about your early years, were you brought up Catholic?

'Yes, I was born to a Catholic mother, and did the whole church thing every week, was baptised, did all the sacraments, and I was actually made to go to church every week. I didn't enjoy it at all, I thought the whole thing was quite bizarre and weird. We had various retreats while I was at school as well, we had the SPEC team come, and they'd do these kinds of workshops and religious workshops for the day. And I just wasn't engaged with it at all.

I thought the whole thing was just bizarre and I didn't understand these expressions people used to say like 'God can transform you' or 'you just need to listen to the Lord'. I was talking to my sister about this the other day and we were saying these kinds of expressions to us felt a bit like talking an alien language.

And then, I think I got to my confirmation and straight after that my mum said, 'Oh, you don't have to go to church anymore'. So that was it, we're not going anymore and obviously me, and my sisters were delighted!

Q. Later on, your life got a bit difficult, feel free to talk to us as much or as little as you want about this time, but what I really want to ask you to focus on is, is the ways that you tried to deal with the difficulties that you had in your life, and who you tried to rely on.

'That's interesting and highlighted in David's talk actually, because I very much relied on myself. I was diagnosed with having social anxiety, which then kind of merged into very severe clinical depression. And it was very severe, it would be about three months of the year, I just I wouldn't work, and I stayed in bed, the whole time I slept. And throughout the day I barely ate anything. And it was really, really bad. So, then I thought I have to help myself, this is kind of my fault, I have to deal with this myself. I have to fix myself. And so, I did all the, all the right things went to therapists, then I can say I've done everything.'

Interviewer: I want to be clear at this stage that if people are struggling with mental health issues, they should seek professional help. I don't want them to just think that they can pray their depression away because people should engage clinically as well.

**The following paragraphs contains information that some people may find upsetting.**

Q. We have to be careful here but, things got really bad for you didn't they, after all of these traumatic experiences. Could you share us with us a little bit about your absolute lowest moments?

'So after quite long period, after about five years I think, I'd really come to the end of my tether with it all. I had tried everything I thought I could try, and I felt the depression actually just got worse - it was a long period of about three months again. I just thought I was a burden on my family, I thought, 'this is my life now, I have to live like this, I'll never hold down a job.' I was having to rely on my family for money. And I just thought, I'm just pathetic. Again, I really related to David's talk, and just FYI I've only just heard that talk today. So, that wasn't planned which is kind of interesting really.

'I just thought I was a waste of space really and then I decided to take my own life, and I took an overdose. It was pretty bad. I was catatonic so I was just completely out of it. I mean I was I was awake, but my eyes were just kind of glazed over and I wasn't moving I wasn't feeling any pain, but that was definitely the worst time.'

Q. There were some things that helped you with your recovery, obviously, the clinical input that you received in the hospital, but there were some faith things as well that sort of really helped you with recovery weren't there, do you mind telling us a little bit about that?

'Yeah, very, very strange things. I mean considering I had been completely kind of against the whole religion thing by that point anyway. It was strange these things started happening. And as I say I was catatonic by that point, but I was still awake and aware, and I started to see some really horrible kind of visions. And again, this is, I mean this is part of the drugs as well and coming off things, but I was seeing these really horrible things and then then in the midst of that I started to see strange visions of a lady in blue. And I have to again be very careful about what I say, because you know I don't claim to be a mystic or anything like that, or anything weird but it was very strange to see this lady, in blue and really calming and she had this veil across her eyes, and she was appearing in all kinds of different races and nationalities and things.

'I remember looking up and wondering is anyone else seeing this, anyone else see what I'm seeing. It was amazing. She was pointing to her eye and then to the sky, which was very bizarre. And it was strange as well because my mum earlier on in the years past, had - I say given up on me but she hadn't given up on me - but she is very Catholic and she's always relied on God and she said, "I kind of gave up and I just entrusted to you to Our Lady", and I don't know what it was, a special prayer or whatever it was. But she said I entrusted you to Our Lady and I think that's kind of cool that she showed up then.

'Then someone at one point, asked if I wanted to see a chaplain. And I thought, yeah okay I'll give it a go! The chaplain came around and read to me and that really brought me a lot of peace and calm in the huge turmoil. And I found out later as well a lot of people were praying for me and had Masses said for me. So sometimes when you don't know what's going on when you've kind of let go - someone else at least is doing it for you and it is it is going on there in the background.'

Q. Did you think, amongst all that darkness, it was this glimmer of faith that gave you a bit of hope for the future, some kind of reason to live?

'Yes, but I don't think I was conscious of it. But yes, I think I because I had given up so much something else had to kind of lift me up then, because I couldn't do it.'

Q. So, what did you do then, how did you follow that up? Where did it go.

'I continued to get better, thank goodness. I stayed in the Mental Health Ward and then got better and came to live by sea in Bognor Regis. Things were better for me, I could have left it, I guess.

I felt like something was still calling me to dig further, I thought 'I've gone through all of this and seen all of what I've seen and can't then just leave it there.' My dad mentioned the priest to me, and I went to see him, and he said you need to just go and ask some questions. It was incredible because all of the questions I had in my mind that I was too scared to ask when I was younger, too embarrassed or sometimes didn't want to offend people, because - I think I said this to you - I don't want to break someone's religion down, you know these poor sweet people, I don't really want to ask them *that* question because then they'll realize it's all wrong and it's all made up. So, I never asked those questions!

'And I'm realizing that, oh my goodness, you *can* ask those questions and ask them to the right person who's got the right answers and I'd gone to the right person - I went to a priest and they know their stuff I'm telling you! The big thing for me which I found amazing was the evidence side... I just thought it was all just 'pie in the sky' and poetic lovely, nice things, and just this nice this fairy story. But the whole thing about the Caesar's Gallic war that we had something like nine copies, I'm sorry I'm probably getting this wrong, I don't know the precise numbers, but it's something like nine copies of Caesars Gallic war and we're happy to believe that as history, and yet there's something like 10,000 /30,000 stories of the existence of Jesus and what he did. And yet, it's amazing that we don't believe that.

'I started asking these questions, it was incredible for me to actually find there are real tangible evidential answers for this. So that kind of blew my mind. And also learning that the Bible was a series of books. This was so new to me. I thought the Bible is one long fairy story when actually there are history books in there, there's poetry, there's songs in there.

'I went to an Alpha course as well which I would recommend anyone to do. It was incredible because you can ask questions there - and there are many questions to ask. So, anyone can go so I really recommend that. And then I went again to the priest. I just thought, ok, well I might as well! He talked about Lourdes, so I filled out a form and decided 'okay so let's go on this pilgrimage. Cool. That'd be cool!' And it was amazing because again, at the start it was like 'everyone's really happy and everyone's just really excited this is kind of exhausting!' And then I got there [to Lourdes] and I was like 'no, I get it. I get why everyone's so happy', and it's like (I think I said) 'Disneyland for Catholics' or something.

'It was just such a place of love, everyone is just lovely and there's so much kindness and love towards the people who are sick, and there's so much to be learned from that as well, learning from people suffering, you know there are people who are dying and they're having their last rites and things and yet they're happy, it's just incredible to see. You wouldn't see that anywhere else.'

Q. Sorry I cut you off there were you going to say something else.

'I was just going to say - I actually realized when I spoke to you last time, and I didn't mention it - when I was younger, I was really afraid of singing and performing, even though I'm a Drama Teacher now. I'd always wanted to be a singer, but I was just so nervous. And in Lourdes, at the end of the week party I got up the courage to sing in front of everyone and I only just remembered that, and it was the first time I'd sung in front of anyone. And I'm sure that led me on to where I am now.'

Q. Where are you now, do you feel loved by God? What does that do for you in your life every day?

'Definitely, yes, amazing. I remember someone else saying in a testimony that it's so true that having a faith is like seeing the world in 3D. It's like your whole life has just been flat. And it's almost like realising the fairy tale is true - and it's amazing, and to feel, I think joy - is such a weird word isn't it - but if I said, peaceful, I think, is kind of a joy. Knowing that whatever happens in my life, and things have happened since, difficult things have happened since, and always at my core I have a real peace that I know is all okay. There's something, something you can never ever break that core down, it is always there.

'So, while I'll be sad there is a real inner core of peace and joy. Which I recommend, really, I'm telling you, you'll get it and you'll be like wow!'

Q. So, what you do now? You praise God don't you, tell us a little bit about that.

'After the Lourdes singing, I pursued it further and then I got in touch with a gospel choir, and I am I now sing for IDMC gospel choir in London with an amazing group of people, and from all faiths, we've got Baptist, Pentecostal, and some other ones that I've forgotten.

'And we all sing together just talking about the joy that we have in our lives, because we know God and we know Jesus and we know what it's all about, which we are so lucky to know.

What David said, about 'if I love this baby' is so interesting. I mean, God invented that. Think about how much he must love all of us.'

Q. Lastly, what would you say to someone, who's watching this and doing a bit of exploring because, perhaps life's been a bit difficult, who might be reaching out, and they're not 100% convinced that God loves them, or that they're lovable. what would you say to them?

'I'd say be really honest and look, retrospectively - everything's great in retrospect, isn't it? I realised, looking back, that God had helped me on all steps of the way. He doesn't always answer your prayers in the way you think he's going to, but he always does, and here I am, so I think really look at your life and realise that God is looking after you every, every step.'

## Prayer & Reflection Questions



*Invited*  
LENT 2021

We come to you Father as your precious children.

Open our hearts to a deeper appreciation of your unfailing love for us. Enable us to recognise your voice as you whisper words of reassurance and fill us with the confidence that we are truly loved as your unique creation.

Be with us as we seek to spread your good news and reach out in love to all those around us.

### Reflection Questions:

- How do I respond to the teaching that God has no conditions upon his love for me?
- Do I ever catch myself trying to 'win' God's approval?

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- Why can it be hard for me to believe that God is forever loving me, longing for me to return - what are my 'stumbling moments'?
- Where in my life have I been aware of God's love? I thank him for it.
- Where in my life would I like to feel God's love? I ask him to come to me in that place - and trust that he will whisper the words 'I love you'.

## Conversation

- **New groups** - spend some time getting to know each other.
- **Established groups** - reconnect in some way - share how you are.
- Look back at the reflection questions and share any responses that you are comfortable sharing. Often, when we think we are alone in a particular struggle, it is reassuring to know that there are many others in the same boat!

Once you have finished reviewing your response to the episode (which could take quite a while depending on the size of the group), it is time to look forward, and explore some of the readings for the upcoming Sunday. We suggest that someone prayerfully proclaims the Word:

### Mark 9:2-10

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So, they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

After a few moment's silence, where you can allow the Lord's words to resonate in your hearts, spend some time reflecting on, and discussing these questions:

- What strikes you within the text that reveals the depth of love God has for his people?

- Peter exclaimed “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here”, How do you feel when you realise you are in the presence of God?
- “This is my son the beloved, listen to him”, Can you imagine being addressed as “beloved” by God?

We would love to stay up to date with your progress, so do take photos of your group and send them to E: [invited@abdiocese.org.uk](mailto:invited@abdiocese.org.uk) telling us a bit about your experience. Please note we may use these photos for future publicity including sharing them on our social feeds and website. Please only take pictures of people over 18 years of age who have clearly given their consent!

With thanks,

The Diocesan Formation Team

## Useful support organisations

The COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for many people. The following organisations offer help, advice and resources to anyone struggling with their mental health at this time:

The [NHS website](#)

Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Papyrus, Prevention of Young Suicide: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org>

You Raise Me Up - supporting families that have suffered the loss of a young person aged 16-25 years.

The [Catholic Mental Health Project](#) - includes information on how to find Catholic pastoral care.

If you or someone you know is believed to be in immediate danger telephone 999.

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