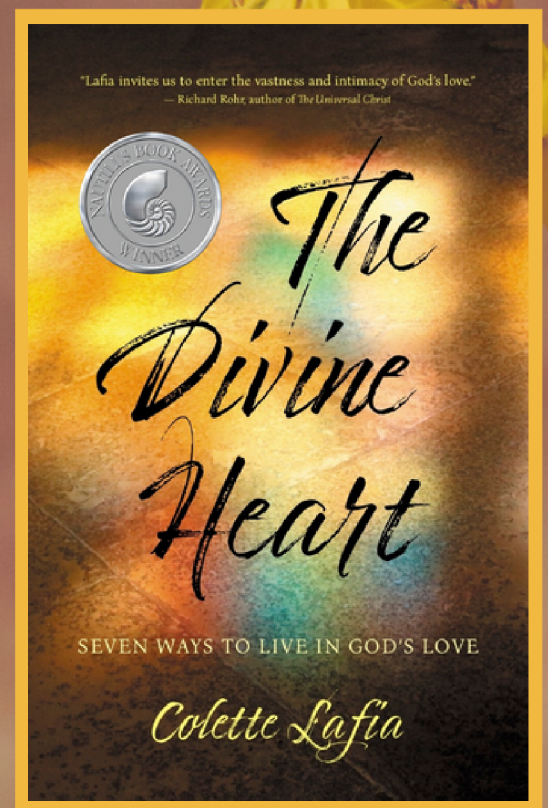


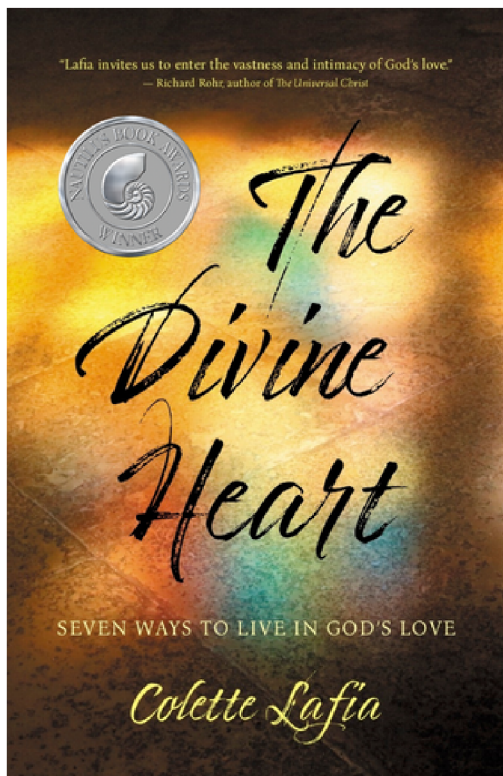
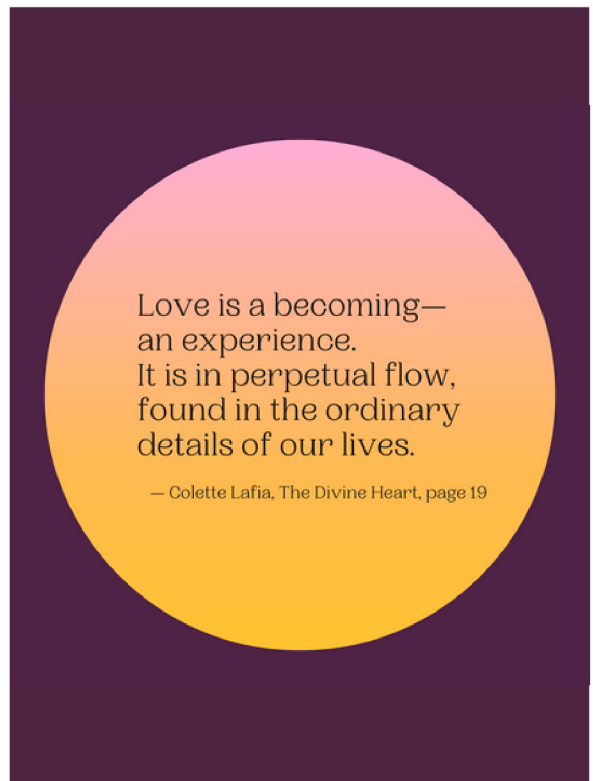
*The Divine Heart:
Seven Ways to
Live in God's Love
by Colette Lafia
A Discussion Guide*



About *The Divine Heart*

“*The Divine Heart* offers simple yet profoundly elegant pathways to deepening one’s love relationship with God, and Colette Lafia lays out each step on the path with exquisite promise. Recognizing that we navigate the depths of our spiritual lives directly in the midst of life as it is, Colette brings God to life for those seeking to deepen or establish living with greater humility, reverence, and faith—qualities that can serve us immeasurably in the world and times we are navigating. Readers can trust that each of the seven pathways that are laid out in *The Divine Heart* leads to the very center of what matters most—love in life and love for life.”

~ Kristi Nelson, Author of *Wake Up Grateful*
Executive Director of A Network for Grateful Living

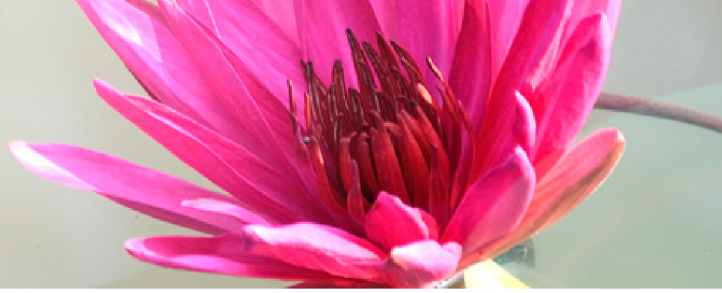


Book Description

In *The Divine Heart*, spiritual director Colette Lafia shows how we can live in an ever-flowing love relationship with the Divine, realizing that God is in us, and we are in God.

The book offers seven “invitations” that can awaken us to this abundant flow of love at the core of our being. Weaving prayers and practices, along with relevant contemporary and mystical teachings, Colette invites us to explore how connecting to Divine love helps us trust our own spiritual experiences and inspires us toward hope, healing, and wholeness.

How to Use This Guide



Using This Guide

My wish is for this guide to be easy to use! My intention is to support both reading groups and individuals. The questions and journal prompts have been created to offer you the opportunity for deeper reflection.

Here you will find:

- Open-ended questions to consider, which can be used by individuals as they are reading, and with your book discussion group;
- A journaling prompt for a 5-minute journaling exercise;
- A simple model you can use to guide your book discussion into a deeper understanding of what it means to live from the Divine Heart.

Colette is available to visit your book club via Zoom, free of charge, so please reach out if you'd like her to join you at colette.lafia@gmail.com.

Testimonial

"Our book club meets twice a month, so we read and discussed two chapters of *The Divine Heart* each session. Colette joined us at the end and we were blessed with seeing how she embodies the teachings in her book. We also had the joy of sharing with her which of the invitations to love touched each of us the most deeply. Colette graciously answered all our questions about how she came to write this wonderful book." — Heidi, Portland, Oregon

Inviting Divine Love into Your Life

Introduction: Living in the Flow of Divine Love

The Divine Heart is an invitation to deepen your relationship with the Divine and live a life overflowing with love. Allow yourself to embark on a journey into the Divine heart, into unity, connection, and belonging.

God is in us and we are in God, and there is an unfolding intimacy between us—with the Divine, with one another, and with all of creation. It is a complete and mutual indwelling.

As you embark on this journey, here are some questions to consider:

- What does “*God is love*” mean to you?
- How do you experience the love that God is always pouring into you?
- In what ways do you express and share that love daily with God, with yourself, with others, and with all of creation?

Each of our experiences of the Divine is uniquely personal, a truth we must honor and claim, and yet, at the core, we share the same bond to Divine love.



Every day we're called to live in and experience this unfolding intimacy. Divine love is the source of all love. As you interact with this guide, let your heart grow into its full expression of love.

*I desired you before the world began
I desire you now
As you desire me.*

*And where the desires of two come together.
There love is perfected.*

~ **Mechthild of Magdeburg**
(13th century Christian mystic)

Invitation #1 – Receptivity: Listening & Responding



How do we make *receptivity* a foundation of our relationship with the Divine and of our life of prayer?

To give love, we need to be able to receive it. This invitation to **receptivity** encourages us to listen to the stirrings of love, release into communion with God, and become more present to Divine love.

“God cannot love you more. God already loves you infinitely.” Embracing this love, we can respond to God, others, and all of life from our heart, which is the source of compassion toward all.

Open-ended questions for individuals and book groups:

- What does deep listening mean to you and in what ways do you practice it in your relationship with God, yourself, others, and all of creation?
- How have you been willing to release your separateness, to make more space for God and others, and to release your heart into God’s ever-present love?
- In what ways have you been willing to be present to Divine love, in yourself and others?

5-Minute Journaling Exercise:

"How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**receptivity**—in your life, towards yourself, in your relationships, and in your experiences with all of creation? In what ways would you like it to grow?"

A simple model to facilitate group discussion:

- What did this chapter/invitation bring up in you?
- How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**receptivity**—in your life and in what ways would you like it to grow?
- Did any questions come up for you as you read this chapter that you’d like to share?

Invitation #2 – Delight: Feeling Life's Wonders, Savoring Each Moment



Can we trust that God is already delighting in us? It's not something we need to earn or make happen with effort, but rather something we can *allow*.

Delight awakens our hearts and invites us into a more creative, dynamic, and abundant relationship with God, others, our deepest self, and all of life. As the way of delight awakens in our lives, we learn to engage more fully with what's already around us, to feel wonder and savor the moments of our life, the joy in our heart.

Open-ended questions for individuals and book groups:

- How do you find delight *engaging with what's around you* through your five senses (what you can see, taste, hear, smell, and touch)?
- Is it possible to reframe your experiences through recognizing the abundance that constantly surrounds you?
- What allows you to see yourself and all of life through the eyes of *wonder*, as the gift and miracle that you and everything around you truly is?
- In what ways do you *savor* the moment, lingering with appreciation over the feast of love that creation embodies?

5-Minute Journaling Exercise:

"How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**delight**—in your life, towards yourself, in your relationships, and in your experiences with all of creation? In what ways would you like it to grow?"

A simple model to facilitate group discussion:

- What did this chapter/invitation bring up in you?
- How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**delight**—in your life and in what ways would you like it to grow?
- Did any questions come up for you as you read this chapter that you'd like to share?

Invitation #3 – Expansiveness: Trusting Our Heart's Capacity

Expansiveness is about opening our heart and extending that openhearted stance into the world.

Opening and expansion happen through deepening trust, by being gentle with our hearts, and by moving closer to what we love. We follow our nature toward love and become a blooming rose.

“In biblical language, heart means our whole being, not one or another part of it, rather the center, the source, the taproot of our being,” as the Christian monk, Brother David Steindl-Rast teaches on how to develop the heart.

Open-ended questions for individuals and book groups:

- How is your trust in Divine love deepening? When do you experience it as easily blown away by the winds of circumstance, or as deeply rooted in the very core of your being? How is that trust embodied in your everyday life?
- In what ways has *gentleness*—in words, actions, and silence—allowed your heart to open, grow, and expand? How do you (and how can you) cultivate more gentleness, peacefulness, and playfulness in your life?
- How willing are you to *get closer* to love, to God, to the wonder of life? What helps you to open more fully and deeply to your own Divine heart?

5-Minute Journaling Exercise:

"How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**expansiveness**—in your life, towards yourself, in your relationships, and in your experiences with all of creation? In what ways would you like it to grow?"

A simple model to facilitate group discussion:

- What did this chapter/invitation bring up in you?
- How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**expansiveness**—in your life and in what ways would you like it to grow?
- Did any questions come up for you as you read this chapter that you'd like to share?

Invitation #4 – Acceptance: Embracing Life and Who We Are



Our relationship with God is so much more than we can imagine.

Through **acceptance**, our relationship with the Divine only deepens. Acceptance is an invitation to claim who we are—the person we were born to be. The more we accept and appreciate ourselves, the more we can live life fully, and more we can accept others as well. Acceptance is a gift and a grace that keeps on giving, each time we recognize and accept our true self.

Open-ended questions for individuals and book groups:

- What helps you to *see yourself through loving eyes*, in the same way that God sees you?
- How do you meet and *make peace with the presence of doubt* in your life, whether it's self-doubt or doubt that challenges your faith?
- What helps you to *embrace that we're all created from the same love* and are connected to each other in the Divine heart?

5-Minute Journaling Exercise:

"How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**acceptance**—in your life, towards yourself, in your relationships, and in your experiences with all of creation? In what ways would you like it to grow?"

A simple model to facilitate group discussion:

- What did this chapter/invitation bring up in you?
- How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**acceptance**—in your life and in what ways would you like it to grow?
- Did any questions come up for you as you read this chapter that you'd like to share?

Invitation #5 – Vulnerability: Becoming Open-Hearted



To be human is to be vulnerable.

Our days and years are marked by one vulnerable moment after another. It's our common ground. The more we live in our heart, the more vulnerable we allow ourselves to become.

Can we welcome **vulnerability**, trusting that it leads to a deepening of love and intimacy? Being vulnerable, letting our guard down and being held in the vast container of love when we're strong and when we're weak takes courage. Embodying vulnerability is a necessary step for living a life of intimacy and love. We can develop an inner stance toward vulnerability by taking more risks in love, allowing ourselves to be truly seen, and being ourselves more—with God and with others.

Open-ended questions for individuals and book groups:

- How do you open yourself to vulnerability and surrender to love? What *risks* are you willing to take?
- In what area of your life are you holding back and yet longing to *be seen*?
- Being *authentic* and fully ourselves often feels vulnerable. Can you remember a time when even though you felt fearful you showed up fully as yourself anyway? What happened and what did you learn from it?

5-Minute Journaling Exercise:

"How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**vulnerability**—in your life, towards yourself, in your relationships, and in your experiences with all of creation? In what ways would you like it to grow?"

A simple model to facilitate group discussion:

- What did this chapter/invitation bring up in you?
- How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**vulnerability**—in your life and in what ways would you like it to grow?
- Did any questions come up for you as you read this chapter that you'd like to share?

Invitation #6 – Mystery: Dwelling in the Mystery of Love



Love humbles us; it's tender, magnificent, and ungraspable.

All we can do, with faithfulness, is give ourselves over to this sacred source of life. As we surrender, love guides us into who we truly are, which is love. It takes humility and grace to sustain the gaze and dwell within this *mystery*.

We enter into communion with mystery in three distinct ways: seeing our relationship with the Divine as alive and dynamic; following our desire to discover love; and allowing ourselves to trust in this mystery, to be in the unknown where intimacy deepens with faith.

Open-ended questions for individuals and book groups:

- In what ways do you experience your relationship with the Divine as *living* and *dynamic*?
- How do you *seek and discover the mystery of love*—within yourself, with others, in nature, and with God?
- Are you able to *trust the mystery*—under what circumstances do you tiptoe towards it, and when do you joyfully dive in?

5-Minute Journaling Exercise:

"How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**mystery**—in your life, towards yourself, in your relationships, and in your experiences with all of creation? In what ways would you like it to grow?"

A simple model to facilitate group discussion:

- What did this chapter/invitation bring up in you?
- How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**mystery**—in your life and in what ways would you like it to grow?
- Do you have any questions about this chapter/invitation that you'd like to share?

Invitation #7 – Gratitude: Relaxing and Enjoying the Relationship



Gratitude is a deep well within from which we can always draw.

It creates the conditions for love to manifest. Responding with *gratitude* to life's ups and downs requires presence and intention. Often, we encounter resistance—ingratitude coming from anger, disappointment, and not accepting what is.

At such moments, gratefulness is a choice we can nurture and strengthen with commitment and practice.

We can encourage gratefulness by following three guiding principles. Gratefulness needs a foundation of rest, finds expression in thankfulness, and invites us to relax and enjoy Divine presence.

Open-ended questions for individuals and book groups:

- In your quiet moments—*in prayer, rest, and stillness*—how do you notice gratitude arising within you, a recognition of life as a gift?
- Everyone and everything around us embodies the generosity of God. In what ways does your gratefulness find *expression in your actions and interactions*?
- The more peaceful and present we are, the more available we are to enjoy and feel gratitude for the gift of Divine love pouring into and through us. What are some of the ways that you *relax and enjoy your relationship with God*, with yourself, and with others?

5-Minute Journaling Exercise:

- "How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**gratitude**—in your life, towards yourself, in your relationships, and in your experiences with all of creation? In what ways would you like it to grow?"

A simple model to facilitate group discussion:

- What did this chapter/invitation bring up in you?
- How do you experience this quality of Divine love—**gratitude**—in your life and in what ways would you like it to grow?
- Did any questions come up for you as you read this chapter that you'd like to share?

Ending Reflection

As we complete our journey together, please read the following paragraph slowly and notice what is stirring in your heart. I invite you to take a few moments to journal what you noticed.

Divine love is our common ground, and we are all invited to awaken to the presence and action of this love in our hearts and our lives. We are all embodiments of Divine love.

The Oneness of this love is in our deepest being and our cells, in every leaf, every snowflake, and each heartbeat: matter and spirit dwelling in every particle of life. As we come to see this intermingling, we can live from this realization through an open, illumined heart.

The nature of intimacy with the Divine is to produce bountiful love and care for the world. The fruits of intimacy with the Divine are measured in compassion and self-giving.

With Gratitude:

THANK YOU for reading *The Divine Heart* and taking the journey to grow in the fullness of Divine Love.

If you'd like to engage in Colette's other online offering for *The Divine Heart*, here is a free one you can try: colettelafia.com/divine-love/

Living In The Flow Of Divine Love

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with Colette Lafia, author of *The Divine Heart*

Register now.

About Colette Lafia



Colette Lafia is a San Francisco-based writer, spiritual director, and retreat leader who sees herself as a teacher of love.



She is a graduate of the Spiritual Directors' Institute at Mercy Center in Burlingame, California, and is now on the faculty in the Spiritual Formation program there. She also recently completed the Living School program, through the Center for Action and Contemplation, where she studied with Fr. Richard Rohr, Reverend Cynthia Bourgeault, and James Finley, PhD.

Colette is the author of *The Divine Heart: Seven Ways to Live in God's Love*, a 2022 Nautilus Book Award winner, *Seeking Surrender*, and *Comfort & Joy*. To learn more about Colette, please visit www.colettelafia.com.

You can connect with Colette on:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ColetteLafia>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/colettelafia>

Please reach out if you'd like Colette to speak to your community or church group about "Living in Divine Love," based on her book, *The Divine Heart*. Contact her at: Colette.lafia@gmail.com