



# A Guided Journal for Lent



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## Introduction to the Journal

"All we need is love!" Well, there may be some other things we need, but certainly we humans can feel when love is in short supply. There is a "hole" we feel when we think we don't have enough love. So we start to try to fill the hole with... what? There are so many ways to think about, talk about, read about, love. **Love can be defined as those things we pay attention to**, those things we adore, those things we think are as important as breathing to us (we just "gotta have it").

It was 1980 when the film *Urban Cowboy* came out, and with it the popular song by Johnny Lee, "lookin' for love in all the wrong places, looking for love in too many faces..." We've looked for "love"—for **meaning, purpose, satisfaction, security** (however you describe it) in so many things that actually haven't given us the depth of "what we're dreaming of," so says the song. Like Scrabble letters that just aren't coming together to spell out anything of worth, we sometimes cobble together things we think will make sense out of our lives, only to be disappointed.

**So much distracts us** from the depth of substantive love that really lasts, that really satisfies. Relationships, money, technology, and possessions are all necessary parts of life. However, we often become so over-focused and over-reliant (obsessed, and not in a good way) on them that, after a while, we are left feeling empty, the hole remains. And there are so many things vying for our attention in this world.

This journal is a way to notice over the next few weeks **what we think about, focus on, and give our attention to most**. It can be a way of helping us reprioritize and recalibrate. Lent is often a season when we think about giving something up. This Lent, perhaps what we can give up is our oblivion to the obsessions that steal our attention, and therefore our love. In giving up oblivion to these things, we can become aware of what really matters and be “intentional about our attention.”

Each week features a word from our worship series that describes a kind of love that Jesus exemplifies. There are fragments of scripture for you to contemplate and then a question for you to journal about. There are two boxes for you to make lists: one for the things you notice throughout the week that you think about A LOT (don't do too much judging about it... just notice, become aware), and the other box for you to list how you would really like to spend your mental energy, time, and attention.

**Tip: Set a reminder for the same time each week to pick up this journal.** Sit somewhere special, that makes you feel cozy and comfortable. Perhaps light a candle to cue your brain that this is a time to relax, contemplate, and focus on time just for you.

Interested in reading a book to accompany your journey this Lent, getting inspiration to go deeper into one area of your life on this subject? The next pages of this journal have some suggestions for you. And you might also like to curate your music choices this season as well. Love songs are abundant in this world, but not all of them describe healthy, liberating love! We've curated a playlist of secular songs that underscore deep and healthy love, whether that is between two people, family, community, or for the world.

**Enjoy!**



# Book Suggestions

There are many, many books out there about conquering addiction, breaking harmful patterns, and developing healthier outlooks and approaches to life. Let this small selection crowd-sourced by the WDS Staff inspire your own research as you consider which topics are most pertinent to you.

**Things That Matter: Overcoming Distraction to Pursue a More Meaningful Life** by Joshua Becker

Life is full of distractions. It's never been harder to focus on what really matters. Joshua Becker's book invites us to discern our highest priorities and to resist letting our lives get derailed by the things that compete for our attention. This book seems especially good as a general suggestion for small group since the themes are broad and can apply to anyone.

**The More of Less: Finding the Life You Want Under Everything You Own** is another book by Joshua Becker that celebrates minimalism and could be a good study about rejecting the call of consumerism.

Hear Joshua Becker speak about "Minimalism, Spirituality, and Why It Matters" in this sermon: <https://youtu.be/I2qIRr51zBo>

**The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up** by Marie Kondo is the minimalism book that took the world by storm in 2014. This book would be great as a study for a group of people who are ready go on a decluttering journey. While this is a secular book, there are many spiritual benefits to "tidying up" our physical spaces that can resonate profoundly in other areas of life.

**You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit** by James K. A. Smith

This book tackles the subject of how our culture shapes us and how our faith practices can help us transform our lives for the better. The book appears to be deeply rooted in philosophical thought and written to be accessible for the average readers.

**Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience** by Brené Brown

Brené Brown's book explores 87(!) different human emotions and illustrates the often surprising ways that our emotions are interconnected. By giving articulate voice to our feelings, we improve our ability to communicate with ourselves and with others. Be sure to check out the study guides, podcast episodes, and other companion materials on Brené's website: [brenebrown.com](http://brenebrown.com). Bonus: HBOMax made a special featuring live teaching episodes of the material in the book.

# Book Suggestions (Continued)

**Surrendered: The Sacred Art** by Rami Shapiro

This book draws upon the wisdom of 12-step groups and applies the principles to navigating addictions of any kind.

**Money Matters: Faith, Life, and Wealth** by R. Paul Stevens

How can we be faithful stewards of our resources and make financial decisions that honor our personal goals, our families, and our communities? This book explores many topics related to money from a spiritual perspective.

**Creating a Life That Matters: How to Live and Love with Meaning and Purpose** by Manis Friedman and Rivka Goldstein

The authors of this book explore purpose, meaning, religion, marriage, morality, and many other diverse topics of life from a Jewish perspective that will resonate deeply with practitioners of any faith.

**Wholehearted Faith** by Rachel Held Evans with Jeff Chu

This special book blossomed out of the last manuscript that Rachel Held Evans was writing before her life was tragically cut short by a severe medical reaction. Written in partnership with Jeff Chu, this book wrestles with some of the tougher subjects of faith and Christian living and ultimately encourages us to embrace vulnerability, uncertainty, and seasons of grief with our whole hearts.

**The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires Our Trust More Than Our “Correct” Beliefs** by Peter Enns

Sometimes we become so focused on knowing the “right” answers that we lose the wonderful ability to trust the mystery of faith. It really is OK to have some uncertainty about life and to embrace ambiguity as a gift.

**The Five Love Languages** by Gary Chapman

While this book was originally written as a resource for romantic partnerships, the principles can be so beneficial for many kinds of relationships — between parents and children, siblings, friends, coworkers, etc. We all show and receive love in different ways, and understanding the love languages of yourself and those around you can illuminate many opportunities to act with love and appreciation towards the people in your life. (There is a version of this book for teens as well.)

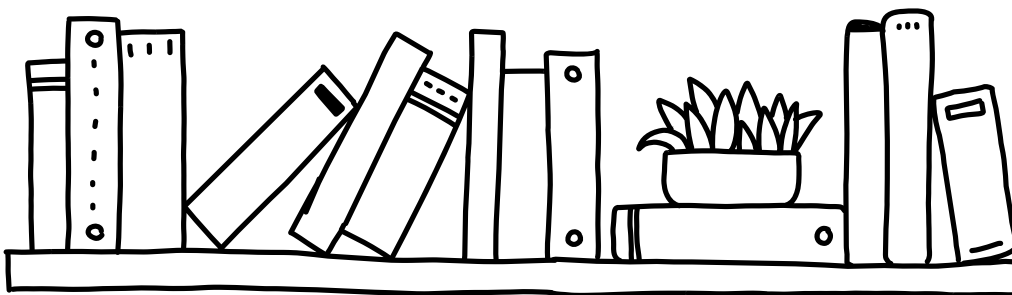
# Devotional Books

## **Embracing the Uncertain: 40 Devotions for Unsteady Times** by Magrey R. deVega

We live in uncertain times, when our very existence is threatened by global climate change (and in the United States, lack of access to universal health care and affordable housing, widespread gun violence, and a growing mental health crisis, to name a few concerns). How do we maintain our own inner peace in the face of such instability? This devotional book seeks to help readers engage with difficult subjects from a faithful perspective as disciples of Christ.

## **The Lives We Actually Have** by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie

This book of blessings is full of assurance and grace for each day of our messy, imperfect, ordinary lives.



## Books for Teens

If you're a teen reading this journal, here are some book ideas just for you:

### **The Self-Love Workbook for Teens** by Shainna Ali

This handbook is designed to help you build self-esteem, cultivate a healthy mindset and habits, and develop a positive relationship to self and others.

### **Healthy Boundaries** by Chase Hill

This book is about “how to set strong boundaries, say no without guilt, and maintain good relationships with your parents, family, and friends.”

### **Self Love Notes: Uplifting Poetry, Affirmations, & Quotes** by Michelle G. Stradford

This book of poetry and quotes could provide some affirming snippets to guide your journaling and self-reflection.

# Music Playlists

The Worship Design Studio Staff crowd-sourced a playlist of healthy love songs! Copy and paste this URL into your web browser to visit the playlist on Spotify: <https://spoti.fi/3BGeihX>

Here is an article we found online with a list of healthy love songs: <https://www.musicalmum.com/songs-about-healthy-relationships>



## Journal Your Thoughts...

What songs would you add to this list? Think about the love songs that you might have saved on your own playlists, or ones that you catch on the radio. Do these songs about love reflect healthy relationships, or not?

Are there songs that are special to you that remind you of great loves in your life? What is it about the music that enhances the connection to love?

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# Week One: Look for the Resister



**"You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with glad  
cries of deliverance."**

**— Psalm 32**

**"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. . . . Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only God.'"** — Matthew 4:1-11

**Jesus resisted evil when he encountered it. He wanted people to understand what was really important — and it wasn't the trappings of fame and fortune. What are things you can resist as a way of making the world a better place?**

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## Week Two: Look for the Helper



**"I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth."**

**— Psalm 121**

**"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."** — John 3:1-17

**Jesus helped people become free from the constraints that kept them from knowing the fullness of God's love. What do you need help seeing that would help you be more free to love yourself and others?**

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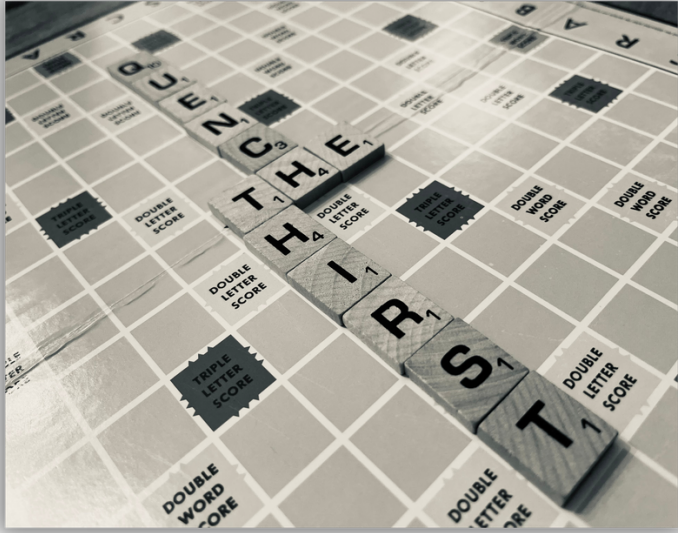


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# Week Three:

## Look for the Thirst-Quencher



**"O come, let us sing to the Lord;  
let us make a joyful noise to  
the rock of our salvation!  
Let us come into his presence  
with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to  
him with songs of praise!"  
— Psalm 95**

“Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I give them will never be thirsty.’”

— John 4:13-14

**Jesus invites the woman at the well to “living water.” Our thirst for love is real, but the places we look for it are not always deep wells. What would you say are truly deep wells where your heart is replenished? Perhaps these deep wells are activities, people, or places.**

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# Week Four:

## Look for the Shepherd



**“The LORD is my shepherd,  
I shall not want. . . .  
You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil...”**  
— Psalm 23

"Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided." — John 9:1-41

**Jesus uses the image of a lowly shepherd to talk about a love that leaves no one behind. He makes sure people are taken care of, saying that people are more important than power and prestige. In what ways are you called to be a shepherd, a lover who cares for others?**

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# Week Five: Look for the Liberator



**"O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem."  
— Psalm 130**

**"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. . . . Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only God.'"** — Matthew 4:1-11

**Jesus is a lover of renewed life for all, of freedom to be fully who God created us to be. He talks about "dying" to the things that keep us down. What are you discovering in your life that keeps your time and attention diverted from the life-giving things that really matter?**

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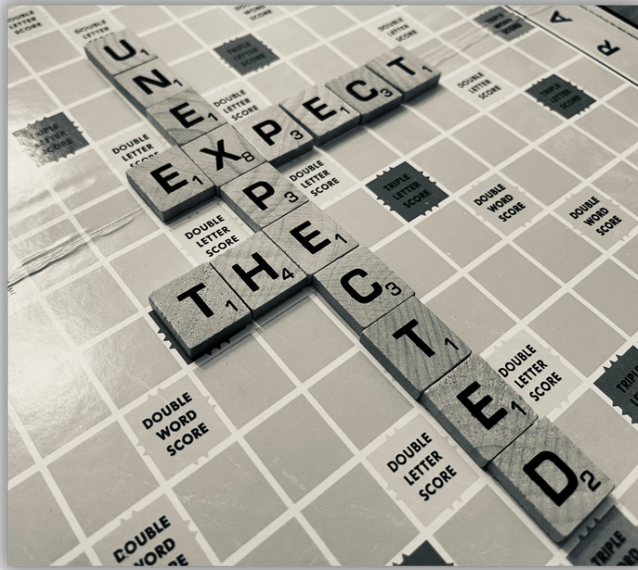
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# Week Six:

## Look for the Unexpected



**"O give thanks to the LORD,  
for he is good; his steadfast  
love endures forever!"  
— Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29**

"...Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them."' — Matthew 21: 1-11

**Jesus came “triumphally” into Jerusalem on a donkey, not a powerful steed. He emphasized that love comes humbly, at eye-level to others on our path. Are there “high and mighty” beliefs that have been elevated in your life that keep you from being in right relationship with others, from compassion for others? How might you change this?**

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# Week Seven: Love Wins



**"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."  
— Jeremiah 31:1-6**

"Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (meaning Teacher)." — John 20:1-18

**Jesus shows us how to love, even in the most difficult of circumstances. On the executioner's cross, he made sure a stranger understood the ultimate forgiveness of God and he made sure that his mother was cared for. Then, he made sure we understood the power of love, that love wins over hatred, over death, over destruction. What evidence of love in your life has felt like your own resurrection?**

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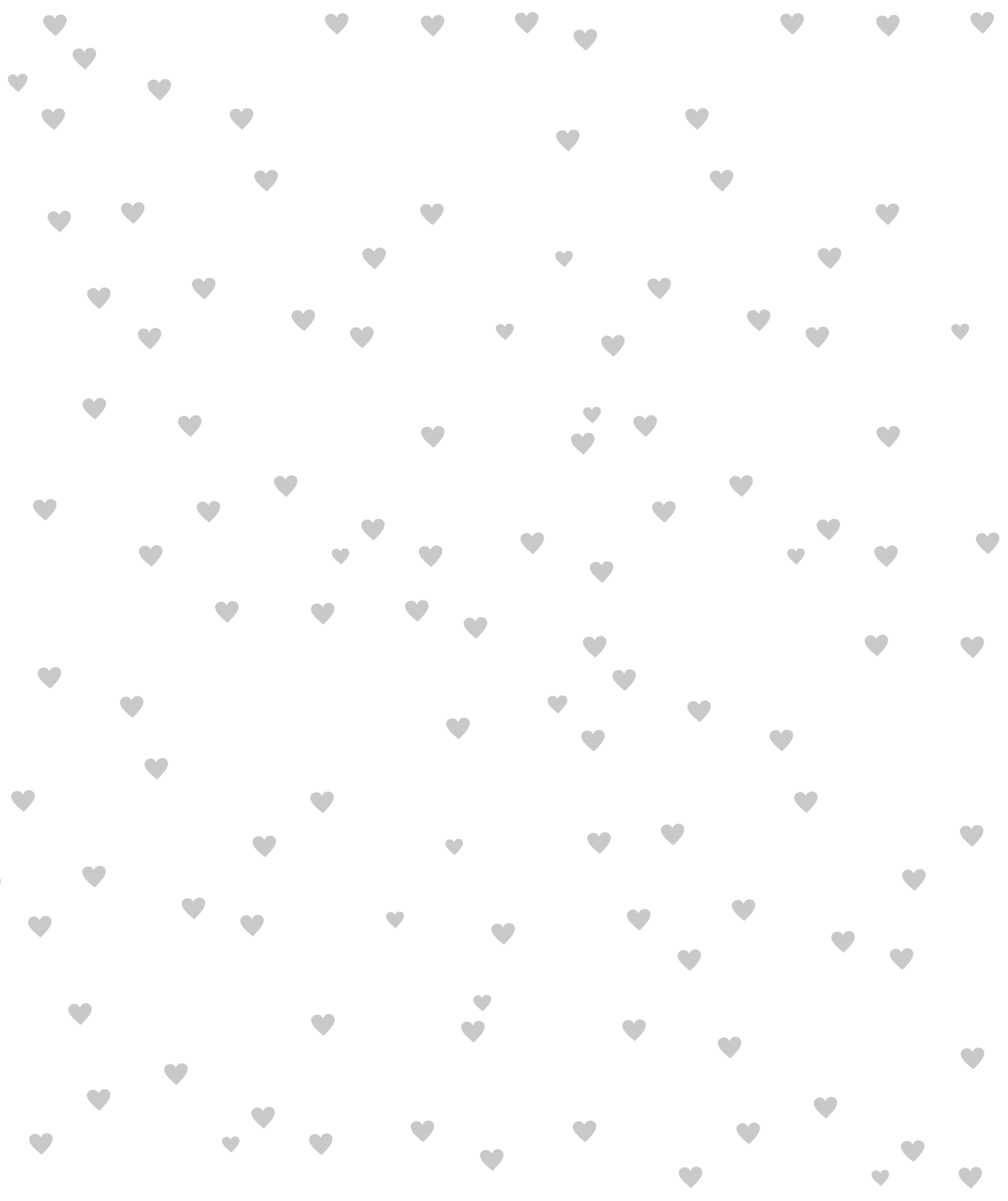


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