

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 4, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *Why We Must Love?* *1 John 4:7-11*

*“<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” – 1 John 4:7-11 (NKJV)*

### **BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup>, & 3<sup>RD</sup> JOHN:**

- (1) **AUTHOR = The Apostle John** – Tradition holds that John was sentenced to death in a boiling vat of oil, yet he emerged unharmed from the experience. Again tradition tells us that John lived into old age perhaps dying sometime after AD 98... He is thought to have died in Ephesus – But in fact the mystery and unknowns concerning John’s death and what happened to him are not known and are varied...
- (2) **DATE = A.D. 90-95** - As with most books in the Bible, we cannot know for certain when and from where these epistles were penned. As to a date, it is commonly believed to have been written close to the end of the 1st century, with a fairly wide possible time frame... somewhere between 90-95 A.D.
- (3) **PLACE OF WRITING = Ephesus** – It is believed by most Biblical scholars that John wrote these letters from Ephesus, the place believed to be where he died. It is usually accepted that John wrote them late in his life.
- (4) **RECIPIENTS = Different audiences** - The Epistles of John were written to various audiences. They were all written after John was an old man living in Ephesus.

(5) **PURPOSE = Multiple purposes** - In terms of a positive stated purpose, John actually gives us reasons why he wrote these epistles:

### **3 Stated Positive Purposes for These Letters:**

1. **That your (our) joy may be made complete** = 1 John 1:4, *“<sup>4</sup> And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”* How may a Christian's joy be full if they lack assurance of faith, or if they are unsure that they are even a Christian and assured of salvation? Why do you think that is?
2. **That you may not sin** = 1 John 2:1-2, *“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”* What affect does sin in the life of a Christian have on his or her assurance? Why? What is John telling us here that might help?
3. **That you may know that you have eternal life** = 1 John 5:13, *“<sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”* Why do you think this (assurance) might have been a stated purpose of John's writing? Why so important?

### **WHAT KIND OF LOVE ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?**

*What do the following statements say about how “love” is often viewed in our world today and by each statement how would they be defining love?*

1. *I love to go swimming! (trivializes love)*
2. *Mom, if you really loved me you would let me go to the party! (love as a bargaining chip... cheapens love)*
3. *I just don't feel in love with you anymore! (love is fleeting and doesn't last)*
4. *If you really loved me you would sleep with me! (love is conditional, sex)*
5. *I saw her across the room and it was love at first site! (objectifies love, no depth of commitment)*

The world's view of love can be very skewed. As a matter of fact, the world's idea of love, or at least the one we see most often display and conveyed by the world does have an impact, but not the one we would desire. The way the world looks at love and set about expressing it often leads to pain, heartache and often abuse. The world's view of love – List some words that you would say describe the way the world views love:

**List some words that are often used today to describe the world's view of love...**

lust  
strong like  
emotional bond

infatuation  
love at first sight  
sex

a fleeting feeling  
passion  
fluctuating feeling

*\*The world says things like, “If you really loved me you would...”, or “I just don’t feel in love with you anymore...”, or will express this feeling for things like, “I love hot dogs, baseball and apple pie!” The world’s love often is a very fluctuating and fleeting thing... very fickle, on again off again kind of emotion. Perhaps that is why, in this world love, seems to so often fail... marriages fall apart, and relationships fail. This kind of love seems less than “authentic” because if so often fails and falls short.*

## **THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLDS VIEW OF LOV:**

### **Four 4 Kind of Love in Greek:**

- (1) **Eros** = **Marital/Sexual Love** – Love between a husband and wife. We get our English word “erotic” love from this word because it refers to sex and the sexual relationship that exist between husband and wife.
- (2) **Storge** = **Family Love** - Refers to love in the family relationship... love between a parent and child, or between brothers and sister, family kin, etc.
- (3) **Philia** = **Friend/Brotherly Love** - Love that exists between friends. This Greek word literally means “brotherly love” and is the word for which the U.S. city of Philadelphia gets its name. The city of Philadelphia is also called “The City of Brotherly Love.”
- (4) **Agape** = **Unconditional love**

**2 Words of Love NOT in the Bible:** 2 of the above listed words for love appear in the Bible and 2 do not. See if you can guess which 2 are not in the Bible and which two are used in the Bible.

- (1) **Eros**
- (2) **Storge**

### **Two 2 Words for Love in the Bible:**

- (1) **Philia**
- (2) **Agape**

*Which of these 2 types of love, found in the Bible, describe God’s divine love? Place a check [✓] beside the appropriate response.*

**NOTE:** *While each of these are legitimate expressions of love in marriage, within a family, and among friends if they are not motivated out of authentic Christ-like love... agape love they will fall short of really having the kind of life changing impact we are talking about.*

## **WHAT DOES AUTHENTIC LOVE REALLY LOOK LIKE**

**KEY STATEMENT:** *Authentic love looks like God’s agape love!*

**3 Characteristics of God's Love:** God's love has many facets or characteristics, but listen as the following three familiar verses are read (or quoted) and see if you can't name 3 of those characteristics based on these three verses or passages.

- (1) **God's love is giving (John 3:16)** - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*
- (2) **God's love is sacrificial (Roman 5:8)** - *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
- (3) **God's love is eternal (Romans 8:37-39)** - *"<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

### **Characteristics of "Agape" Love or Divine/God Love:**

- (1) **Agape is the word for love most rarely used by the Greeks -**
- (2) **Agape is the most commonly used word for love in the New Testament -**
- (3) **Agape is used to describe unconditional love -** Love that says "no matter what you do I'm going to keep loving you!"
- (4) **Agape is the highest form of love in the Greek language -**
- (5) **Agape pictures the deepest kind of commitment -** This is committed love.
- (6) **Agape is used in the New Testament to describe God's divine love -**
- (7) **Agape is an authentic love that really does impact the lives of those around us -**
- (8) **Agape was/is most accurately demonstrated in Jesus -**

If authentic love and an accurate picture of it can most clearly be seen in Jesus, we must ask ourselves what does that look like so that we may imitate it. Paul essentially addresses this in **Ephesians 5:1-2**. Listen to his words, *"<sup>1</sup>Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. <sup>2</sup>And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* Do you see it? We are to be imitators of God's divine love exhibited in Jesus Christ. We need look no further than Jesus to see what an "authentic" love that can make a difference looks like:

### **Characteristics of the Love Jesus Exhibited:**

1. **A love for enemies – Matthew 5:43-48,** *"<sup>43</sup> 'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*

2. **A love for the disenfranchised – Matthew 9:35-38,** <sup>35</sup> *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. <sup>36</sup> But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary<sup>[b]</sup> and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. <sup>38</sup> Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”*
3. **A love for those in need – Matthew 20:29-34,** <sup>29</sup> *Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. <sup>30</sup> And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” <sup>31</sup> Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” <sup>32</sup> So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” <sup>33</sup> They said to Him, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.” <sup>34</sup> So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.”*
4. **A love that was empty of self – Philippians 2:1-8,** *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*
5. **A love that willingly to died for others - John 15:13,** <sup>13</sup> *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”*
6. **A love that transcends words - 1 John 3:16-18,** <sup>16</sup> *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup> But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him. <sup>18</sup> My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*
7. **A love that never lets go – Romans 8:35-39,** <sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” <sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
8. **A love that never fails – 1 Corinthians 13:8 & 13,** <sup>8</sup> *Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether*



there is knowledge, it will vanish away...<sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” And **Ephesians 3:17-19**, “<sup>17</sup> that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—<sup>19</sup> to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

### **Why We Must Love (1 John 4:7-11)**

*“<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* – 1 John 4:7-11 (NKJV)

### **Application Questions**

1. *How can we determine when doctrinal issues are significant enough that we can no longer work with professing Christians?*
2. *Practically, how should we show love to a difficult person? Do we confront his sin or overlook it? Where are the boundaries?*
3. *Why is it important to think carefully about the different ways that the Bible speaks of God’s love? What errors result if we ignore these differences? How do we integrate them?*
4. *Since no one loves perfectly, how do we apply verses 7 & 8? How much love must we demonstrate to know that we are born again?*

The church father, Jerome, said that when the apostle John was in his extreme old age, he was so weak that he had to be carried into the church meetings. At the end of the meeting he would be helped to his feet to give a word of exhortation to the church. Invariably, he would repeat, “**Little children, let us love one another.**” The disciples began to grow weary of the same words every time, and they finally asked him why he always said the same thing over and over. He replied, “**Because it is the Lord’s commandment, and if this only is done, it is enough**” (cited by John Stott, *The Epistles of John* [Eerdmans], p. 49).

As we come to these verses, we may identify with those early believers. John has already emphasized the importance of love...

- **1 John 2:7-11** - *“<sup>7</sup> Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. <sup>8</sup> Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true*

light is already shining. <sup>9</sup>He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. <sup>10</sup>He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. <sup>11</sup>But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” **What is John telling us about love in this passage? Love is a marker/sign of one who is in the light**

- **He hit it again in 1 John 3:11-18** - “<sup>11</sup>For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, <sup>12</sup>not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. <sup>13</sup>Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup>We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. <sup>15</sup>Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. <sup>16</sup>By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup>But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? <sup>18</sup>My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” **What is John telling us about love in this passage? Not only is love a marker/sign of a genuine/authentic believer, it should be sacrificial and shown by out deeds/actions**
- We may be prone to say, “Okay, brother, we’ve got that one down now. Let’s move on to something else.”
- But John not only repeats the imperative to love one another in our passage in 1 John 4:7- 1 John 5:4, but also **he hits it longer and harder than at any other point in the book.**
- He wants to make sure that we understand that love is not an optional virtue for the believer.

### **Some Important Summary Statements John Has Already Made About Love: (previously in 1 John)**

- (1) **Love is not an optional virtue for the believer –**
- (2) **Love is to be the distinguishing mark of the church in the world –**
- (3) **Love is an indicator that one truly knows God - John goes so far as to say that if you do not love others, you do not know God (1 John 4:8)**
- (4) **Love is the supreme standard by which we must examine our own lives - So we all need to examine our own lives by this supreme standard.**
- (5) **Love is the inevitable result of being born of God, but it is not the automatic result - By way of introduction, note that while love is the *inevitable* result of being born of God, it is *not* the *automatic* result. Notice, John states in 1 John 4:7, “<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” The implication is that the life of God imparted to us in the new birth manifests itself in love for others. If we are children of the One whose very nature is love, then we will be like our Father. But at the same time, John commands in 1 John 4:11,**

*“<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* It is not automatic or effortless! There is always room for growth in love.

(6) **Love is not opposed to truth** - John has just spent six verses warning us beginning in 1 John 4:1, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”* NOTE...

- He did *not* say, “Let’s just set aside those points of doctrine where we disagree and come together where we do agree, loving those who differ on these matters.” - Because these men denied essential truth about Jesus Christ, John calls them false prophets, whose teaching is the spirit of antichrist.
- Love does not mean that we set aside the truth for the sake of unity.
- John was there when Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one, that the world would know that the Father sent Him (John 17:23).
- But he also heard Jesus pray, *“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth”* (John 17:17).
- *How can we determine when doctrinal issues are significant enough that we can no longer work with professing Christians?*

We have to exercise wise discernment here...

- Some doctrinal differences are not essential to the gospel, and we need to love brothers who differ with us on these matters.
- Some of these doctrines are important for how we live the Christian life, and so we may vigorously debate them among ourselves.
- But we must always remember that we are debating as brothers in Christ
- If we divide from one another over every minor point of doctrine, we fall into the errors of “fighting fundamentalism.”
- At the heart of that sort of cantankerous behavior is a spirit of pride, where I assert that everyone must agree with me on every minor issue.
- At the same time, some issues fall into a gray zone or area, where salvation may not be at stake, but to embrace a particular view may have serious consequences. *For example, on the subject of temperance (use of alcohol), or what about the subject of spiritual gifts (arguments for or against the existence of sign gifts and the gift of tongues, etc.), how about the difference of use of differing Bible translations (King James only vs. other modern translations), and the list can go on and on of sub-matters and secondary and tertiary doctrines that may be debatable and considered somewhat gray areas.* (On a practical level, I have to day that I have definite views and convictions on these types of issues and I think I am prepared to defend my views Biblically). But, we should not accuse those who differ with us of not being saved, unless they also deny the essentials of the gospel.
- But there are other doctrines where believing or rejecting them make the difference between heaven and hell. On these issues, we must never compromise truth for the sake of love.



- To deny the necessity of the substitutionary atonement of Christ (which John affirms in verse 10), or that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, apart from our works (Eph. 2:8-9), would be to deny the gospel.
- To deny the trinitarian nature of God, or the deity of Christ or His perfect humanity, would be to deny the gospel.
- We do not practice God's love if we set aside such important truths for the sake of unity.
- It would not be loving for a doctor to give a lot of hugs to a person with cancer, if he did not warn them of their serious condition and seek to provide the cure.

The connection between what John says in 4:1-6 and his abrupt change of subject in our passage in 1 John 4:7ff stems from 1 John 3:23... *“<sup>23</sup> And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave <sup>[a]</sup>us commandment.”*

In 1 John 4:1-6 (that we looked at last week), John explains the first part of that commandment, namely, believing in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. Now, he turns to the second part of the commandment, the need to love one another. He tells us why we *must* love one another:

*We must love one another because God is love and He showed it by sending His Son as the propitiation for our sins.*

In our passage (in 1 John 4:7-11) and following John breaks down why we must love one another into five (5) parts...

### **5 Part Outline of 1 John 4 – Why We Must Love One Another:**

- (1) The reason we must love one another = 1 John 4:7-8**
- (2) The supreme illustration of why we must love one another = 1 John 4:9-10**
- (3) The commandment to the why we must love one another = 1 John 4:11**
- (4) The evidence in the why we must love one another = 1 John 4:12-16**
- (5) The maturity in the why we must love one another = 1 John 4:17-21**

This evening we will explore at least the first three of these... and consider two part reasons why we should love one another...

### **2 Reasons We Should Love One Another: (According to 1 John 4:7-11)**

- (1) We should love one another because God is love (1 John 4:7-8)\_**
- (2) We should love one another because God showed His love by sending His Son for us (1 John 4:9-11)**

## **WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE (1 John 4:7-8)**

*“<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”*

Twice (4:7, 11) John practices what he preaches by addressing his readers as “beloved.” Of course, genuine love requires much more than calling someone tender names, but John’s readers knew him to be a man who practiced love for them. His words and his behavior were in harmony.

As already mentioned, our culture uses the word “love” in many different ways: “I love pizza!” “I love the mountains!” “I love my children.” We often think that love is a sentimental, syrupy feeling. So we need to remember the biblical definition of love. Based on several similar texts (John 3:16; 13:34; Eph. 5:2, 25; 1 John 4:9-10), I worked out this definition: *Biblical love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.*

At its heart, biblical love is a *commitment*, and thus it may be commanded. But it is not a commitment without feeling, but a *caring* commitment. In other words, biblical love involves delight, not just duty. Also, this caring commitment is not just an attitude, but an action: it *shows itself* in deeds. Those deeds often require *self-sacrifice*, seen supremely in Jesus’ going to the cross. The goal of this commitment is *the highest good of the one loved*, which is that the person be saved and be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Thus biblical love allows for loving correction when needed.

John shows us the source of genuine love and then draws an inevitable conclusion:

### **2 Inevitable Conclusions Concerning Genuine Love:**

**(1) God is the source of genuine love, because it comes from His very nature** - John states (4:7) that, *“love is from God,”* and then he goes farther and states (4:8) that, *“God is love.”* Of course, even unbelievers may demonstrate sacrificial love for others.

- Unbelieving parents often sacrificially love their children or their mates.
- Unbelieving soldiers may lay down their lives for their comrades.
- These loving deeds stem from God’s common grace.
- While such love is caring and self-sacrificing, it never can be *genuinely* biblical, because unbelievers cannot seek the *highest* good of the one loved, namely, that the other person may come to saving faith and conformity to Christ.

John wants us to know that whenever we see genuine biblical love, it did not originate with the person. It came from God. He is the only source of love in the world.

John goes even farther when he states, *“God is love.”* Almost everyone readily embraces that concept, but it is often misunderstood and taken to unbiblical extremes.

- Some misconstrue it to mean that because God is love, He overlooks or is tolerant toward sin.
- Some go so far as to say that because God is love, He could never condemn anyone to the eternal punishment of hell.
- But the Bible is clear that God's love does not negate His holiness and justice, or vice versa.

In 1 John 1:5, the apostle stated, *"God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."* John also has said, *"He is righteous"* (2:29). God's holiness and His love are both a part of His nature, and neither negates the other. So John did not see any contradiction between the concept that *"God is love"* and the concept of His punishment of the wicked in hell.

So while it is vital that we affirm, "God is love," it is also vital that we affirm, "God is holy," and, "God is the righteous judge." We also need to think biblically about the statement, "God is love." On the surface, it sounds simple, but when you begin to consider all that Scripture teaches on this, it gets rather difficult.

D. A. Carson wrote a perceptive little book, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* [Crossway]. He points out (pp. 16-19) that the Bible speaks about God's love in at least five different ways

### **The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God / 5 Specific Ways the Speaks of God's Love: (D.A. Carson)**

(1) *The peculiar love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father (John 3:35; 5:20; 14:31; 17:24) -*

(2) *God's providential love over all that he has made -* He cares for all of His creation, so that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His permission.

(3) *God's saving stance toward his fallen world -* God so loved *the world* that he gave His Son (John 3:16). Carson argues (p. 17, correctly, I think), *"On this axis, God's love for the world cannot be collapsed into his love for the elect."*

(4) *God's particular, effective, selecting love toward the saved -* Many passages in both the Old and New Testaments affirm this aspect of His love (Deut. 7:7-8; Rom. 9:13).

(5) *God's love is sometimes said to be directed toward his own people in a provisional or conditional way—conditioned, that is, on obedience -* Jesus tells us (John 14:21), "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.

I might add that, perhaps another aspect of Christ's love was His special love for the apostle John, who refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23). Of course Jesus loved all of the disciples with a special love (John 13:1), but He loved John in a unique sense. Carson goes on (pp. 21-24) to point out that if we do not recognize these various aspects of God's love, and we make any one of them absolute, exclusive, or

controlling all the others, we will get into difficulty. If all that we talk about is God's love for the whole world, we end up with a God so weak that He can't intervene to save us according to His sovereign purpose.

On the other hand, if we only speak of God's love for His elect, we will not be able to offer the gospel freely to sinners. At the same time, Carson points out that we must not compartmentalize the various loves of God, as if they were each independent of the others. We must integrate these truths in biblical proportion and balance. And, he argues, we must be careful about various evangelical clichés. For example, to say that God's love is unconditional is true if you are referring to His elective love, but it is not true with regard to His disciplining love of His people. A sinning Christian needs to understand that he abides in God's love only when he obeys God. So, the seemingly simple statement, "God is love," is not quite so simple after all! But John wants us to know that the foundation for our love for one another is God, who is the source of love and whose very nature is love.

**(2) God's true children display His nature... love** - John states this both positively and negatively (4:7-8), *"everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God..."* Some find significance in the fact that John does not repeat the phrase "is born of God" in the negative statement, but I do not. All that are born of God know God.

The false teachers claimed to know God in a secret, deeper sense, but John is saying that they do not know God at all. They are not born again, because they do not practice biblical love. Their teaching and their behavior simply promoted self, not Christ.

John's main application here is that children take on the characteristics of their parents. If we have been born of the God who is love, and thus have come to know Him, we will be growing in love. Or, the opposite is also true. The one who does not love shows that he does not know God. We need to take this to heart in a serious way. There are many who may claim to be born again, but they do not love others, nor reflect a love for other, and many times you would be hard pressed to even find an example of them even making an effort to do so. They are angry, unkind, impatient, abusive in their speech, self-centered in their daily lives, and judgmental of others. They spread malicious gossip with great delight, and they are defensive if you try to point out any of these sins to them. Of such people, **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** says (*The Love of God* [Crossway], p. 45), *"Oh, my heart grieves and bleeds for them ...; they are pronouncing and proclaiming that they are not born of God. They are outside the life of God; ... there is no hope for such people unless they repent and turn to Him."*

John's first point is, because God is love, if we are His true children, then we must love one another.

## **WE SHOULD LOVE BECAUSE GOD SHOWED HIS LOVE BY SENDING HIS SON AS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS (1 John 4:9-10)**

*“<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*

John makes two points in verses 9-10:

### **2 Points in 1 John 4:9-10:**

**(1) God’s love is seen in us in that He sent His Son so that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9) -** *“<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.”* John’s point here seems to be that we, as God’s born again children, are Exhibit A of His great love that sent His only begotten Son to this wicked world. *“Only begotten”* focuses on the uniqueness of Jesus in relationship to the Father. He alone is the eternal Son of God, who existed in the beginning with God (John 1:1). We who were rebels, dead in our sins, did not deserve to have Him come to this world to redeem us. Why did He come? To display or manifest His great love in us, to His glory (Eph. 1:3-12)! John says that Jesus came to this world *“so that we might live through Him.”*

- Christianity is not primarily a matter of a person deciding to stop certain sinful practices and to start doing morally acceptable practices.
- It is not a matter of changing from being a non-religious person who spends Sundays for himself, to becoming a regular churchgoer.
- Rather, at its heart, Christianity is a matter of God imparting new life to those who are dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1-5).

That new life manifests itself in loving behavior. As born again people who have experienced God’s love, we should display His love to this wicked world that crucified the Son of God.

**(2) Love is truly seen, not in our loving God, but in His loving us by sending His Son as a propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10) –** *“<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”* So that we don’t get our focus on ourselves, or get puffed up with pride over how loving we are, John directs us back to God’s love as seen in His sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. *“Propitiation”* means to satisfy God’s justice and wrath toward our sin.

His love didn’t just brush aside our sin, because His holiness and justice would have been compromised. Rather, His love moved God to send His own Son, who bore the penalty that we rightly deserved.

Notice... the initiative was *totally* with God! He didn’t wait until we showed some promise of changing or until we cried out for help. Rather, as Paul put it (Rom. 5:8), “But



God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Since God has so loved us, John’s conclusion is inescapable:

**THEREFORE, WE OUGHT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER (1 John 4:11)**

*“<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

“*Ought*” implies obligation or commandment. That love can be commanded shows that it is not primarily a feeling, but rather an action based on commitment. As I said, love is not devoid of feeling, but it is not based on it. We must love others or we are being disobedient to God.

If everyone were easy to love, we wouldn’t need this powerful example of God’s love or this strong exhortation to love one another. The world loves those that love them. But Jesus commands us to love even our enemies (Matt. 5:43-47).

Implicit in what John is saying here is that we must love those who may not be especially lovable or easy to love. If I may speak hypothetically (I’m sure that no one can relate to this!), you may have a mate that is self-centered and difficult to live with. John says, “Beloved, if God so loved you, you also ought to love that difficult mate.” There may be people in this church whom you do not like. John says, “Beloved, if God so loved you, you also ought to love that difficult person.” It is in these difficult situations that God’s amazing love in Christ shines forth in us. If you’re having trouble loving someone, remember that God loved you while you were yet a sinner. He sent His Son to a world that is filled with sin. If you are His child through the new birth, then you must be the channel for His love to flow to those who may not be very lovable.

**CONCLUSION**

I read an amazing story that came out of the Korean War. A young Communist officer ordered the execution of a Christian civilian. When he learned that his prisoner was in charge of an orphanage and was doing much good in caring for small children, he decided to spare his life, but kill his son instead. The 19-year-old boy was shot in the presence of his father.

Later, when the tide of events changed, this same officer was captured, tried, and condemned to death for war crimes. But before the sentence could be carried out, the Christian father pleaded for the life of this Communist who had killed his son. He admitted that if justice were followed, this man should be executed. But since he was so young and blindly idealistic, he probably thought that his actions were right. “Give him to me,” he said, “and I’ll teach him about the Savior.”

They granted the request. That father took the murderer of his son into his own home. As a result of his self-sacrificing love, that Communist became a Christian pastor (“Our Daily Bread,” April, 1980).

Thankfully, most of us will never have to go through that kind of ordeal! But, if God so loved us, shouldn’t we work at loving one another in our homes and in this church, even when it is difficult?

There is a vast... even infinite difference between secular love and Christian love.

### **The Difference Between Secular Love and Christian Love: (Dr. John Piper, Desiring God)**

- (1) **Christian love is rooted in the cross** - First, there’s a different source of these two loves. 1 John 4:19 says, *“We love because he first loved us.”* And how did he first love us? Well, John says in 1 John 3:16, *“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”* So, Christian love is rooted in Christ’s sacrifice for me and for you. By this our sins are forgiven. We’re justified, accepted, and loved by God.
- (2) **Christian love is shaped by the Spirit** - Second, Christian love is sustained and shaped by the work of God’s Spirit, where secular love isn’t. Paul calls it the *“fruit of the Spirit”* in Galatians 5:22. It is the Spirit that takes the death of Christ, causes it to be real for us, and gives us new hearts so that the death of Christ has a love-producing effect on us. 1 John 3:14 says, *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.”* Love in our lives is the evidence that the Spirit of God has brought us from death to life. *“Love in our lives is the evidence that the Spirit of God has brought us from death to life.”*
- (3) **Christian love is aimed at God’s glory** - Third and finally, Christian love has a different goal – to live for the glory of God. Our love, exhibited in Christ and lived out through us, always has as it’s aim God’s glory. Therefore, when Christians talk about seeking the physical good of a person, for example, we do so in the hope that they will experience this physical good as a gift of God and receive it in the name of Jesus and rely on the Holy Spirit to use it for his glory. If all those Godward dimensions are missing, our love is falling short of its goal. The Bible tells us to do everything to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), so we should love people for the glory of God.