


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM



A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out across the ground and over the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL *EVANGELISM* FOUND IN JOHN 4, “THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.”

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24

REVEAL

- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26

- The **APOSTLE JOHN** offers several *litmus tests* in his first epistle. Of those, perhaps his most critical barometer of **authentic Christian faith** is found in chapter four. When he says that **“love is from God”** (1 John 4:7), he is pointing out that **God** is the *origin* of all *true love*. **LOVE** is therefore the *best evidence* that a person truly knows God: **“Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God”** (1 John 4:7–8). In other words, **LOVE IS THE PROOF OF A REGENERATE HEART. ONLY TRUE CHRISTIANS ARE CAPABLE OF GENUINE LOVE.**

- Clearly, the kind of love the *apostle* is speaking of is a higher, purer form of love than we commonly know from human experience. The love of which he speaks does not flow naturally from the human heart. It is not a **CARNAL LOVE**, a **ROMANTIC LOVE**, or even a **FAMILIAL LOVE**. It is a **SUPERNATURAL LOVE** that is peculiar to those who know God. **IT IS GODLY LOVE.**

- **DONALD W. BURDICK** gives *three characteristics* of this **godly sort of love**:
 1. IT IS **SPONTANEOUS**. There was nothing of value in the persons loved that called forth such sacrificial love. God of His own free will set His love on us in spite of our enmity and sin. [**AGAPĒ**] is love that is initiated *by the lover* because he wills to love, not because of the value or lovable-ness of the person loved.
 2. IT IS **SELF-GIVING**. [**AGAPĒ**] is not interested in what it can gain, but in what it can give. It is not bent on satisfying the lover, but on helping the one loved whatever the cost.
 3. IT IS **ACTIVE**. [**AGAPĒ**] is not mere sentiment cherished in the heart. Nor is it mere words however eloquent. It does involve feeling and may express itself in words, but it is primarily an *attitude* toward another that moves the will to act in helping to meet the need of the one loved.

- **ALL *TRUE BELIEVERS* HAVE THIS *LOVE*, AND ALL WHO HAVE IT ARE *TRUE BELIEVERS*.**
- This kind of love cannot be conjured up by the human will. It is wrought in the hearts of believers **BY *GOD HIMSELF***. ***“We love, because He first loved us”*** (1 John 4:19). Love for God and love for fellow believers is an inevitable result of ***THE NEW BIRTH***, by which we ***“become partakers of the divine nature”*** (2 Pet. 1:4). Just as it is God’s nature to love, love is characteristic of His true children. ***“The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us”*** (Rom. 5:5).
- ***GODLY LOVE*, THEREFORE, IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TESTS OF THE REALITY OF ONE’S FAITH.**

UNMASKING UNBELIEF

- **LOVE** is intrinsic to God's character. It is also a critical arbiter for distinguishing **WHO IS**—and **WHO ISN'T**—one of God's people.
- In writing his first epistle, the **APOSTLE JOHN'S** goal was to help struggling believers gain assurance of their salvation. He states his purpose in (1 Jn. 5:13): ***"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."***

- But **1 JOHN** also serves a *secondary purpose*, and that is to destroy the *false assurance* of those who may profess faith in Christ without really knowing Him. Therefore, he writes such things as:

- *“If we SAY that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 John 1:6).*

- And *“The one who SAYS, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4).*


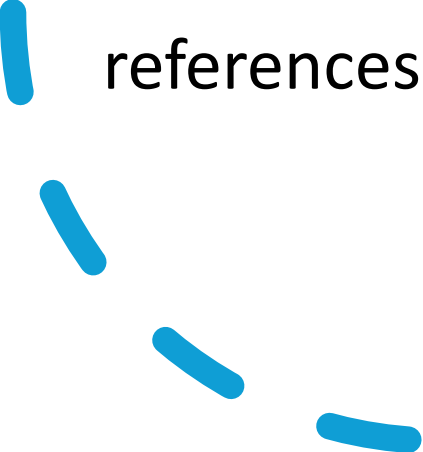
- And *“The one who SAYS he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now” (1 John 2:9).*

- Here he makes **GODLY LOVE** a kind of **LITMUS TEST** for the true Christian: ***“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love”*** (1 John 4:8).
- With regard to that statement, **MARTYN LLOYD-JONES** observed:
- John does not put this merely as an exhortation. He puts it in such a way that it becomes a desperately serious matter, and I almost tremble as I proclaim this doctrine. There are people who are ***unloving, unkind***, always ***criticizing, whispering, backbiting, pleased when they hear something against another Christian***. Oh, my heart grieves and bleeds for them as I think of them; **THEY ARE PRONOUNCING AND PROCLAIMING THAT THEY ARE **NOT BORN OF GOD****. They are outside the life of God; and I repeat, ***THERE IS NO HOPE FOR SUCH PEOPLE UNLESS THEY REPENT AND TURN TO HIM.***

- Sadly, most of us have encountered professing Christians whose hearts seem bereft of any genuine love. The **APOSTLE JOHN'S** admonition is a solemn reminder that a mere ***pretense of faith*** in Christ is worthless.

- **GENUINE FAITH** will inevitably be shown by love. After all, real faith works through love (**Gal. 5:6**). This sort of ***God-given love*** is not easily counterfeited. Look at all that is involved:

- **LOVE FOR GOD HIMSELF-** (1 Cor. 16:22).
- **LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN-** (1 John 3:14).
- **LOVE OF TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS-** (Rom. 6:17–18).
- **LOVE FOR THE WORD OF GOD-** (Psa. 1:2); and even
- **LOVE FOR ONE'S ENEMIES-** (Matt. 5:44).

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- Such love is contrary to human nature. It is antithetical to our natural selfishness. The very thought of loving those things is odious to the sinful heart.
 - Later in this same chapter, the *apostle* writes, ***“God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him”*** (1 John 4:16)—again making the ***GODLY KIND OF LOVE THE MARK OF GENUINE FAITH.***
 - ***MARTYN LLOYD-JONES*** listed ***TEN*** simple, practical ways of ***KNOWING*** whether we abide in love. I’ve paraphrased them here and added Scripture references to underscore each point:
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IS THERE A LOSS OF THE SENSE THAT GOD IS AGAINST ME? (ROM. 5:1; 8:31).

IS THERE A LOSS OF CRAVEN FEAR OF GOD, AND A CORRESPONDING INCREASE IN GODLY FEAR? (1 JN. 4:18; HEB. 12:28).

DO I SENSE THE LOVE OF GOD FOR ME? (1 JN. 4:16).

DO I KNOW THAT MY SINS ARE FORGIVEN? (ROM. 4:7–8).

DO I HAVE A SENSE OF GRATITUDE TO GOD? (COL. 2:6–7).





DO I HAVE AN INCREASING HATRED FOR SIN? (ROM. 7:15–16).

DO I DESIRE TO PLEASE GOD AND LIVE A HOLY LIFE? (JN. 14:21; 1 JN. 2:5–6).

IS THERE A DESIRE TO KNOW GOD BETTER AND DRAW NEAR TO HIM? (PHIL. 3:10).



IS THERE A CONSCIOUS REGRET THAT MY LOVE FOR HIM IS LESS THAN WHAT IT OUGHT TO BE? (PHIL. 1:9–10).



IS THERE A SENSE OF DELIGHT IN HEARING ABOUT GOD AND THE THINGS OF GOD? (PSA. 1:1–2).

- ***SUPPOSE YOU FAIL THOSE TESTS.*** How can you know the love of God?
- In ***LLOYD-JONES'S*** words, ***“YOU NEED NOT START TRAVELING THE MYSTIC WAY, YOU NEED NOT TRY TO WORK UP FEELINGS; THERE IS ONLY ONE THING FOR YOU TO DO: FACE GOD, SEE YOURSELF AND YOUR SIN, AND SEE CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOUR.”*** [3]