

Everyone Needs Love; So, How's Your Love Life?

(1 John 4:7-12)

What is True & What to Do:

Love comes from God in that He loved us first by sending His one and only Son to die so that you might live; therefore, if you are a true Christian born of God, you ought to love others selflessly as He loved you.

Background:

Our study of John's letter over the last few weeks has examined the tests by which a person who has become a child of God may know that he or she is authentically a member of God's household. We have looked at three markers of spiritual re-birth: righteousness, love, and truth. First, the test of "doing what is right" (righteousness) in 1 Jn. 3:4–9. Second, the test of "loving one another" in deed and truth (speech backed by action). Third, the test of "discerning truth and error" as found in 1 Jn. 4:1–6.

While all three are important, John places the greatest emphasis on the need to love. He does not neglect the need to discern truth or do what is morally right. For example, John has already said that the person who claims to know God and who does not live a righteous life is a liar. "The apostle who composed the fourth Gospel in order that those who read it might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" is not going to minimize the truths concerning Jesus Christ, nor any other doctrines." As we've already studied thus far, John is also writing pastorally to those who had resisted the Gnostic errors and excesses. They had not abandoned the truth, nor had they fallen into loose living. But did they really love? Did they really love one another?¹ This question continues to challenge Christians today. Perhaps you have witnessed Christians with good moral behavior on the outside who sadly show very little love for others. And, on this point, John's position is clear: not loving others is a huge problem!

So, as we move further into chapter four, John once again focuses on the need for us to love. This is not the first time we've heard John consider the test of love. The first time related to "true light" in 1 Jn. 2:7–11. The second time related to "eternal life" in 1 Jn. 3:11–18. And while both are important, John now builds upon them to develop his third test relating to the very nature and character of God—namely, *God is Love*.

Saying *God is love* brings implications. For example, (1) the exhortation to love one another (repeated three times) in verses 7–12 (*our passage for today*), (2) love for sound doctrine in verses 13–16 (*next Sunday, 11/13*), and (3) the perfection of love as seen in having confidence before God on the day of Judgment (17–21) (*the following week, 11/20*).

Our Love for Others ...

1.) Is a Sign that We Know God; So Let Us Keep on Loving One Another (v.7–8) Why? ²

- Love is from God's nature ("God is Love"; also "God is Spirit" (Jn. 4:24) and "God is light" (1 Jn. 1:5). v. 7–8 reference the Father; v. 9–11 reference the Son; v.12 references the Holy Spirit ("God lives in us"). God is Love, and we are of God
- Love is God's gift in Christ: 1) He gave Jesus, His One and only Son; 2) He Gave His Son to Die, and 3) He gave His Son to die for Sinners
- Love is God's "present activity in and through his people"; How are men and women (who do not yet know God) supposed to know Him? Although God cannot be seen, He can be seen in those in whom He abides and in whom his love is perfected. Holy Spirit inside you is a witness to others.

2.) Comes From God's Great Love for You (v. 9–10)³

- God's great love caused the mission of sending His Son
- God's great love caused Him to send His one and only Son
- God's great love and purpose of His Son ("we might live")
- God's great love originates with God and not us
- God's great love is shown by its cost: God sent Jesus to be the propitiation ("to appease His wrath") for our sins.

3.) Brings His Love to Perfection in Us (v. 11–12)

"We also must" love one another, means something like this: Live out day-by-day who you are as those who are born of God, know God, and have experienced the love of God in the sacrifice of His Son. We are simply experiencing and enjoying who we are in Christ when we love one another. After all, God's seed is now in us (3:9), and God's Spirit is now in us (3:24). Loving others is just what we do because the love that has rained down on us now fills us as we abide in Him.⁴

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 113.

² James Montgomery Boice, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 114.

³ D. Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God's Family*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 189.

⁴ Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 1 Jn 4:11.

APPLICATION:

- The practical conclusion from the love of God expressed in the death of Christ on the cross: we ought to love one another. Godlike living demands love. Look at the word “ought.” The word in Greek means we are bound to love. It is our responsibility to love one another.⁵
- Given the motive (God’s love for you) and power (God’s Spirit in you), you have everything you need to love others selflessly or to reconcile over any differences, large or small. Yes, some people can become difficult to love at times, but God makes it possible.
- Conflict will occur in every Christian setting, given human fallenness, remember that others have been created in the image of God, and love is not optional because it is obligatory.
- Take “yourself” off the throne. Deal with your self-centeredness, self-assertion, self-conceit, self-indulgence, self-pleasing, self-seeking, self-sensitiveness, self-defensiveness, and self-sufficiency. Now, because of Christ in my life, it is all about him and others. When I see myself as I really am, when I have died to myself, it is impossible for someone to insult me or offend me.⁶
- There is nothing you can do to make God love you any *more* than he loves you right now. There is nothing you can do to make God love you any *less* than he loves you right now. You love because He loved you first. Remember what a great love that is!
- Ensure others see more of “Christ’s love in you” than “You in Yourself”; The question is: if God has bestowed such love on us, will we conquer all our petty reasons for not loving one another?
- God’s love produces a genuine change in us. When we respond to God’s love, we are able to become loving people. This is why John speaks more than once in his letter about love being “perfected” in us (2:5; 4:12, 17). By “perfected,” John means that love has reached its aim, purpose, and goal for our lives. You cannot command unsaved people to love others. They may or may not do it. But you can command Christian love. As one who has been born again, I now have the capacity to love. Though I am tempted to act like my old unsaved self, as a Christian, I recognize I have no right to live like an unsaved person. I must live like the Christian I am⁷

- As Spurgeon, in his sermon on this passage said:

Go forth at once, and try and make reconciliation, not only between yourself and your friend but between every man and God. Let that be your object. Christ has become man’s reconciliation, and we are to try and bring this reconciliation near to every poor sinner that comes in our way. We are to tell him that God in Christ is reconciled.... God is now able to deal on gospel terms with the whole race. We need never think that we shall meet with men to whom God will not consent to be reconciled.⁸

NOTES:

⁵ D.Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God’s Family*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 192.

⁶ D.Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God’s Family*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 192.

⁷ D.Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God’s Family*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 187.

⁸ Spurgeon, *Treasury of the New Testament*, p. 559.