

# 1 John 4:7-21

## *Evidence and an Expression*

Image Church // Love Your Neighbor: Week 3

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### Introduction

Well, good morning Image fam, I hope you're doing well! If it's your **first time** we're so glad that you're here with us this morning... We want to connect with you and so we would love for you to stop by the **FTG** tent, or **you can text GUEST to the number on the screen** so that we can follow up with you!

We're in a series called **Love your neighbor**, and the foundation for this series that I held up on *weeks 1* comes from **Matthew 22** where Jesus is asked what Command is the greatest and Jesus says:

**"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38** This is the greatest and most important command. **39** The second is like it: **Love your neighbor as yourself. 40** All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

What Jesus said here has been held up as **The Great Commandment** because of that very last part, where He says that everything **depends** or **hangs** on these two things... *Loving God and loving your neighbor...*

That doesn't mean that everything else in Scripture is irrelevant or not important, but what it means is that these two things are what everything else is pointing to!

- That the wagons circle around these two things... This is the heart of God's redemptive plan!

That God's love impacts your love Him, and it should overflow to your neighbor...

And so, in this series we're taking a deep dive into what that looks like and what it means, and how we practically live this out...

And this morning we're going to look at how when God calls us to love for our neighbor, He's **not just** talking about an **external approach** when it comes to mission, but He's also talking about an internal reality for the church...

And we're going to look at what this means, why this is true, the purpose it serves and how it should look...

**So, if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to 1 John 4...**

By the way if you're a guest with us this weekend and you don't have a bible, we have one as our gift to you...

- You can grab it on your way out at the table in the lobby...

Ok, so 1<sup>st</sup> John was written by the same guy that wrote the Gospel of John... *And his name is John...* He was one of Jesus disciples- love this- always referred to himself *as the one whom Jesus loved...*

We're going to be in the 1 of the 3 letters by John that are grouped together...

And here's the **thesis** of this letter that we're in: John lays it out in **chapter 5 verse 13: I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.**

So, everything in **1 John** is geared toward that end, and here in **chapter 4**, John's going to give us a framework for this that's rooted in loving one another... *Let's jump in...*

### 1 John 4:7-21

**7** Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

OK, so one of the first things that we need to understand right out of the gate is that **love is part of God's nature...** It's woven into who he is, it's... He's self-giving, He's self-sacrificing, He's loyal, He's faithful, He's intentional and He's consistent...

Because that's **His nature**- evidence as to whether or not you know God is expressed through your love for one another... If love is part of God's nature you can't claim to know him and not emit love...

*And then John's going to show us God's nature by holding up God's activity, God's not just love as a conceptual idea, He's made His loving nature evident...*

**Verse 9:** God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him.

**10** Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice, for our sins.

God **revealed** His loving nature by sending His Son Jesus into the world so that we might live...

**But for us to live it Jesus would have to die...** God did something incredible... Something unthinkable...

God created humanity, but humanity would reject its creator, rebelling against God... And sin like a disease permeated the world infecting each of us...

We're born with a heart that doesn't long after God, but that **instead** is filled with selfish desires, we instinctively turn away from God to the things of this world, we love the created things over the creator as we choose our way over God's way...

And because of our sin and rebellion that we stand condemned and separated from the God who made us...

- And there's nothing we could do to change that- we're guilty and **we can't undo that which we're guilty of committing...**

And God could have wiped us out, He could have destroyed His creation and just started over, God would have been just, we would

have gotten what we deserved... **BUT GOD** chooses to offer salvation in the midst of our sin even when we didn't deserve it...

He sends His Son to come and live perfectly in our place- **being righteous in the place of rebels...**

Jesus would willingly sacrifice His life on the cross, the creator would give His life for the creation, the righteous for the rebel, the innocent for the guilty...

Jesus would give His life as payment for our penalty of the sin we committed... He was our **propitiation**: satisfies the wrath of God... Jesus absorbs the wrath of God in our place...

- **Example:** Dam breaking

And Jesus wouldn't stay dead, He would raise from the dead so that He could extend to us new life through Him!

- That through Him you're no longer are a sinner separated from God, but you get the opportunity to be a son or daughter because of His **atoning sacrifice** that amends our relationship with God...

**Listen, Redemption always comes with a cost...** God's plan for bringing restoration for humanity came at the execution of His Son...

We're the ones that chose to walk away from God, and yet God, in the midst of our sin and rebellion comes to us to do what we could never do for ourselves!

- **Appeal:** Who would allow their child to die for someone on death row?? **GOD DID!!**
- We need to sit in the reality of what Jesus has done for us...

**Romans 5:8** says: *God demonstrated His love of us in that while we were still sinners Christ Died for us!*

**The defining characteristic of God is love; and the defining quality of God's love is the grace he showed to us through Christ.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> JD Greear, *Assured Because of Our Love for Others*.

What we see in this is something very important that John points out...

That **Love originated from God**:

- The nature and the origin of love is **from God**, love doesn't start from us or in us, it starts with God...
- We can't view love through our terms and then project it onto God... When we do that we minimize the incredible way that He's loved us...

What that means, listen this is revolutionary... Is that **God doesn't love you because you love Him**... You love Him because of in response to the love He had for you... Love for God is possible because of the love He had for you!

- That means that you can't earn God's love because He's already given it to you through Christ- **you just receive it!** It's a gift of eternal proportions...
  - Some of you need to hear that and **stop working for the love of God** and start embracing God's love for you in spite of your failures!
  - Stop feeling unqualified or not good enough...

Alright, now John comes back to the **tangible response** that is emitted in light of the love that God's lavished on us through Jesus... Here it is: **Verse 11: Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another.**

**Must love or ought to love**: this is like how a fish ought to swim, a bird ought to fly, a lemon ought to be sweet... It's just want these things are supposed to be and supposed to do...

This goes beyond imitation...

- This is why Jesus was more than a teacher to imitate...

So, this is not about **imitation**, this is about **transformation**...

- **Example**: Adalyn doesn't act like my child, **joke**, she **is** my child, it's who she is, there is no imitation that could make her

my child... She functions in that capacity because it's who she is...

The same is true when you trust in Jesus, you have a new identity in Christ, He's the center of your life- and it's through faith that you continue to look to Him and His finished work and He begins to characterize your life... You begin to live in a way that reflects Him!

And then watch how cool this is, how all of this fits together here, **verse 12: John says: 12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us.**

Something incredible happens when we love one another, when we love one another we demonstrate the reality of the unseen God...

- By loving one another you validate who your daddy is...

John says **God's love is made complete in us when we love one another...** It's not that His love is lacking anything...

- It's that when we love one another we complete the circuit that God intended for His love...
  - **Example: electrical work**...
    - You have to complete the electrical circuit correctly for a light to come on... The light is evidence that the circuit is complete...
    - Loving one another **completes the circuit**, it shows that you're connected to the right power source and that your heart is in the right place...

And when the *light comes on*, when we love one another, it radiates as **a visible expression of the goodness of God!** God has chosen to display His goodness **through** His followers **to** other followers!

- That's unreal!!

*Now, John's going to show us how God does this through us...*

**Verse 13 This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.**

The Spirit of God you the **power** and **ability** to radically love one another...

- The Spirit is what transforms your selfish heart into a heart that can love...

And then John shows us how we get access to the Spirit that gives us the ability to radically love one another? And you know you have it in you!

**Verse 14** And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent his Son as the world's Savior. **15** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God remains in him and he in God.

The way that you get access to the Spirit that has the power to transform your heart, the way that you can have confidence that the Spirit is in you is through belief in Jesus...

There's nothing else that you have to, there's no additional ceremony that you have to do in order to receive the Spirit- you just believe the gospel- as you continue to fix your eyes on Jesus you access the power of the Spirit that enables you to do what God's called you to do!

And then he says in **Verse 16** And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.

**IOW:** This is all legit, we eye witnesses have seen and believed and been impacted by this personally! *Then John again reminds us that: God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. And now he's going to add a confidence booster:* **17** In this, love is made complete with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world. **18** There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love.

It's the love of God at work in us resulting in the love for one another that gives us **confidence** that the love of God remains in us through the work of the Spirit through us...

And it's the **reality of God at work** in us and through us that that gives us confidence for eternity!

This is crazy!! God's called us to love one another and in the midst of that, it serves as tangible evidence of the reality of our hearts revealing that we are in fact resting in the love that God had for us because He's at work in us through the way we're loving one another...

And because He's at work in us there's no need to fear! We're not working **for** God's love and fearful if He will accept it, we're living in light of God's love- and that serves as confidence!

*And then John comes back again to the overall theme where he started to continue to drive this home... Repetition shows the importance of us getting this...*

**19** We love because he first loved us. **20** If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

And in case we haven't gotten it by now, John brings one last point of clarity... **21** And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

OK, so let's summarize, what is it that we need to see here?? **I want to give you 3 specific takeaways** that's going to help us apply this text...

### **1. Loving one another is evidence of genuine faith**

**Example of trusting a boat...** The evidence that I trust it is revealed in my action to step on the boat...

You can tell that I trust the boat **how**? Because I'm standing on it, my position and posture reveal my trust and confidence...

- The same is true when it comes to your faith...
- **Loving one another is tangible evidence of your trust in Jesus...**

**But here's the big questions that we've all been waiting for... How does this look?? What does it really look like to love one another??**

- We're not talking about just being nice...
  - *Saying hello to someone... nailed it!*

We live in a culture where everyone is about love- here's the problem, **people want love to hold up love as the means to push their own agenda...** Which means it's really **not** love, it's selfishness...

- We have a need to hide behind love to make us feel good... We do one nice thing every blue moon and we think to ourselves we're loving...

What John is talking about in loving one another, goes way beyond a one-off... it's a life style, it's a position that you assume, it's laying down our agenda, laying down our privileges, laying down our comfort, laying down our convince...

Here's how Jesus would model it... **Washing His disciples' feet...**

- *Jokes- that's nasty- you know Peter's were the nastiest- fisherman...*
- If I asked you to do that to the person next to you that would be gross as we have access to all the *fru-fru*

Savior of the world gets down on his knees and washes His disciples' feet...

**Gospel of John 13:12-15** When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer clothing, he reclined again and said to them, **"Do you know what I have done for you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.**

*This doesn't mean that you go up to someone after our gathering and ask to wash their feet...* What Jesus is pointing to is a life where you're considering others as more important than yourself- a life that's characterized by your willingness to serve others...

*Here is another angle on this:*

**1 John 3:16** This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. **We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17** If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God's love reside in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.

Here's what it looks like to lay your life down in the simplest form: **Show compassion...** to meet the needs of your brothers and sisters...

Is your life marked by compassion and care of your brothers and sisters, or is it marked by self-centeredness??

- Does your compassion reflect the compassion of Jesus?? He is the standard...
  - Game-changer- re-orient's our perspective...
    - So, are you laying down your agenda, laying down your privileges, laying down your comfort, laying down your convince, laying down your time, serving others, being hospitable for the sake of others???

Those who are the beneficiaries of the love of God, love God in return, and that will manifest itself in our love for our brothers and sisters.

- That's hard... I know... But that's the point, life's not about you it's about Jesus, and we reflect that by loving one another!

*Second thing that we need to see...*

**2. Loving one another is a concession for the church for the sake of the world**

**Look at the wording from this text:**

- John says: *Dear friends*
- *God's love revealed among us*
- *God's love made complete in us*
- *God's love made complete with us*
- *Brothers and sisters is used 3 different times...*

But I want to highlight something here in **Verse 21** where John says:

**21** And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

What John is doing here is picking up on a major theme from the Last Supper discourse where Jesus says in **John 13:34-35**:

**34** "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus says **this is how** people will know that you are my followers!!

We were talking about being missional as a CG one night, and there was a girl in our group that said: *We have to actually be loving one another in a way that puts Jesus on display... We can do all the missional things we want, but if we're not loving each other well then people won't see anything different about us and ultimately we won't be pointing people to Jesus...*

**Y'all listen to me...** What should be attractive about the church **isn't** the music or the preaching **but the love that permeates from the people that make up the church...**

This is what we see in **Acts 2** and **Acts 4** – the church exploded not because they had the best worship vibe, and because they were culturally relevant... They didn't explode because of good preaching... **Peter** of all people preached the first sermon!

**They exploded because they were committed to God and they were committed to one another and together they advanced the mission...**

- People were drawn to them, they had favor among all people, the way they were loving and living was attractive to the outside world...
  - People really crave that kind of relationship...
    - *CrossFit- sweat dripping all over other people- that love...*

The question is, are you committed to live out this love command within our church??

#### **How can you do this?**

- Become a covenant member
- Giving
- Serving: Hospitality
- Being involved in local missions
- Going on a mission trip
- Being in a Community Group

#### **Community Group:**

Like we see in Acts 2 in people's homes as they do life together...

- This is where you see, hear and experience the needs of others...
- Where you're challenged to put their needs over yours...
- Where you pray for one another
- Where you serve one another and practice hospitality...
- Where you stay connected throughout the week together encouraging one another

This is why we have location-based groups so that this can be possible...

Why a core value for us is responding to the gospel by growing as a family member...

Please hear me on this... CG isn't just another event once a week, where you check a box, it is a launching pad into life together!

- It is your family- treat it like that...

The more that you grow in your walk with Jesus the better Church family member you become!

Some of you have to ask the question about *margin* you have no margin to love one another... That's a problem...

- How can you create margin to do this??
- How can you be intentional with your dives home or with a text message or with a meal that you have to eat anyway??

**Remember:** intersection not addition...

**[Vamp]**

**3. Loving one another reminds us of the love God's shown us**

*Confidence builder here!*

As we love others and are loved God uses it to remind us of who He is and where our hope trusts...

- Often times you can be the means by which God demonstrates Himself to others!

## Conclusion

**If you're here and you're not a Christian...**

Church would we make know the incredible unseen God through the way that we love one another, would it be contagious just like it was in the early church!!

**At the end of the day here's what you need to remember:**

**John 15:9** "As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. **Remain in my love.**