

Title: The Only Path to True Love

Text: 1 John 4:7–12

True love...video

Christians need to understand what true love truly is. And the only way we can understand what true love is, is to understand God.

We are in the third and final sermon in “The Only Path” series.

- The Only Path to Joy.
- The Only Path to Transformation
- The Only Path to True Love

The Apostle John, in his first of three short letters, is encouraging his readers to learn how to distinguish between true teachers of the gospel and those who are false teachers. And you know what? You can have a ton of head knowledge of the Bible. And you can fake a lot of things. But there is one distinguishing characteristic of the true follower of Christ that cannot be manufactured. And that is TRUE BIBLICAL LOVE!

And why is this so? Because TRUE LOVE comes from God!

Main Idea: Love Because God Is Love

There are three powerful facts that John wants his readers to understand from this passage of Scripture. Facts that are born out of the understanding that we are to Love Because God is Love...

And the first fact is we are to...

1. Love One Another (vs. 7-8)

1 John 4:7–8 ESV

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Love’s Source is God - John admonishes his readers that they have a tremendous responsibility and privilege. They are to love one another.

Why are they to love one another? Because it is a nice thing to do? Because it makes people like you? Because love is all you need, and love makes the world go round?

No, those are not the reasons we are to love one another. There is a far greater and far more profound reason we are to love one another.

We love because God is the source of love.

He is the epitome of love.

In fact, He is love.

1 John 4:16 ESV

¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

God is love and therefore is the very definition of love.

We don't get to define love. We don't have the privilege to redefine love.

For example, notice what is happening in our culture. If I don't agree with you about something, you might say that I don't love you. In fact, that is what the entire cancel culture is predicated on.

Love means I must agree with you; otherwise, I hate you.

But if that were the case, God would have never rescued us from eternal Hell.

Certainly, God does not agree with sinners, and sinners do not agree with God.

Yet if it were not for God's love that looked past our sin, because of His great love, and rescued us, we would be doomed.

Romans 5:10 ESV

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

God's love motivates Him to look past our sin and rescue us!

John 3:16 ESV

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

But I want you to notice something about God's love and those of us who profess to be followers of Christ.

One Who Loves is of God - Do you ever wonder if you are really a child of God?

2 Corinthians 13:5 ESV

⁵ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

How can we test ourselves? One way to test ourselves is to see if we love others the way God defines love.

Is your love self-sacrificial or self-absorbed?

Is your love about putting others before you or putting yourself before others?

Is your love like the love of God?

John tells us, if it is, if you love as God loves, then the logical and glorious conclusion is that you are born again! You are born from above.

You can't love as God loves without the love of God in your heart and soul.

Why? Because even those people with the most altruistic of actions have some self-centered motivations when it comes to loving others – There is something within them that desires admiration – They have the “Look at me” motivation.

But the genuine follower of Christ doesn't say, “Look at me.” They say, “Look at HIM!”

I love because of Him. I love because He first loved me!

But don't miss the warning in this passage. Don't miss the opportunity to test yourself to see if you are in the faith.

1 John 4:8 ESV

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

One Who Does Not Love is Not of God - The beauty of this letter is the simplicity of its content. John is not complex here. The idea is difficult, but John is not unclear.

If you do not love others the way God loves others, you are not a born-again Christian.

Look at what John says earlier in this letter.

1 John 3:15–17 ESV

¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 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. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

1 John 4:20 ESV

²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

So, there is a binary situation regarding love here.

If you love like God loves, you are born again. Because it proves his supernatural love lives within you.

If you do not love like God loves, you are not born again and the best you can muster up in the love department is a shadow of the genuine love of God.

So, the point? You and I, followers of Christ, are to love people with Christlike love.

In a busy, cosmopolitan city, a man lost his job and found himself homeless. People rushed past him daily, faces buried in phones, indifferent to his plight. One day, a man from a neighboring community, motivated by a Christ-like love, noticed him. He didn't just toss him some change; he stopped and talked, recognizing his dignity. Driven to help, he connected him with a local shelter and even arranged a job interview within his company. They stayed in touch, his kindness evolving into a true friendship. His love was a modern-day reflection of Christ's teaching,

demonstrating that compassion and empathy can break through even the busiest, most disconnected world.

Loving others (as God defines and demonstrates) with a self-sacrificial love is tell-tale evidence of your salvation.

But why would God have us prioritize love? Why would He command us to love one another with a self-sacrificial love?

Two reasons

1. Because it reflects His character and thus glorifies Him.
2. Because it creates the catalyst for change in a family, church, and even community. When people love one another with a Christ-like love, it is a powerful apologetic for the gospel.

Consider someone in your life that you are struggling to like – perhaps a fellow church member, a coworker, or a family member. Picture their face, their smile, and their presence in your life.

This week, I challenge you to extend a hand of love towards this person, a love that is sacrificial and unconditional.

Begin by finding tangible ways to show them you care:

Speak Encouragement: Whether through a handwritten note, a thoughtful text, or a heartfelt conversation, express to them what they mean to you. Your words can be a beacon of hope and affirmation.

Act Kindly Without Expectation: Reach out and do something kind for them. It may be as simple as helping with chores or as grand as a thoughtful gift. What matters is the intention, without expecting anything in return.

Commit to Prayer: Pray for them every day this week. Lift them up to God, ask for blessings upon them, and trust that your prayers will be heard.

Reflect on Your Actions: At the end of the week, take a moment to reflect on how these acts of love have not only affected their life but transformed yours as well.

Remember, love is not just a fleeting emotion; it's an action, a commitment, a way of life. As it's written in [1 Corinthians 13:1](#), 'If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.' Let our love be more than words; let it be a melody that resonates in the hearts of those we touch. Embrace this challenge, and let's fill our church and even community with the enduring love of Christ.

Review - Love Because God Is Love

- Love One Another

2. Love Like God (vs. 9-10)

1 John 4:9–11 ESV

⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

In verses 7-8 John admonishes his readers to love one another. In verses 9-10 he gives the best possible example of loving others. God's love for us! And at the end of this example is the reasoned command that we must do likewise as followers of Jesus.

Let's tear this verse apart and see the amazing truths that will help us Love Like God.

God's Love is Visible – We can actually see it!

1 John 4:9 ESV

⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

The love of God was made **manifest** among us - The word **manifest** means to make visible, conspicuous, apparent, known, shown, openly.

God's love was not simply an idea or even an action. The love of God is a person - Jesus Christ. A person that John knew as a dear friend. By the way, you can know Him too.

Jesus makes love visible...

God's Love is an Act of His Will – He decided to pursue you!

1 John 4:9 ESV

⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

God desired to allow you and me to have the opportunity for rescue. He set forth a plan for our rescue by sending Christ as the agency of our liberation.

God's Love is Sacrificial – It is free to us but cost Him more than we can fully appreciate.

1 John 4:10 ESV

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Propitiation is a pretty big word. But an incredibly important word for the validity of your Faith.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament 2434. ἱλασμός hilasmós

to propitiate, expiate. Propitiation. The benefit of Christ's blood for the sinner in the acceptance by the Father. "To make reconciliation for the sins of the people," which means to pay the necessary price for the expiation and removal of the sins of the people.

Christ's propitiatory sacrifice gives you the opportunity to have God's wrath against you go away. This is how the NLT translates this verse...

1 John 4:10 NLT

¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

And if you are going, to be honest about us as sinners, we do not even come close to being righteous, holy, and deserving of salvation. Frankly, we are unlovable.

God's Love is for the Unlovable -

1 John 4:10 ESV

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Not simply sin in general, but do you notice what John says in this verse? He refers to “our sin.” In other words, sin is personal. We are all culpable for sin.

Romans 3:23 ESV

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

You have sinned. Not just once, but you have sinned, or broken God's perfect law so many times it would be impossible to count.

And because you have personally sinned, you need a personal Savior, which is why God sent His Son.

God's Love Deals with Sin - We are unlovely. We are broken. We are in desperate need of redemption and rescue. And there is only One qualified to accomplish the rescue of enemies of God, and that is the Christ.

1 John 4:10 ESV

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

This is an amazing thought. God is pure, holy, and righteous. Sin is an abomination to Him.

Proverbs 6:16–19 ESV

¹⁶ There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

The term "**abomination**" refers to something that is viewed with extreme disgust or hatred. It's a strong term that conveys a deep sense of repulsion.

This is how God feels about sin.

Habakkuk 1:13 ESV

¹³ You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

Yet, God loves you and desires to rescue you from the very thing that disgusts Him in such a visceral way.

And God uses the Christ to deal with your sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God Doesn't Seek the Lovable - Dr. Chad Bird

The love of God is not like our love. The love of God does not seek the lovable, the likable, or the one who will love him back. God loved us, as it were, even before he found us, even before he created us, from the very foundation of the world. Indeed, his love created us, formed us in our mother's womb, recreated us in the womb of the church, and continues to love us even when we are mean, spiteful, and unmerciful.

Men in search of a wife look for a woman who is attractive, who will love them back. Not God. He found an ugly, disease-infested prostitute whose life was littered with impurity, shame, and every manner of wickedness. This woman God joyfully made his bride. He washed her clean of every filth, forgave her past, clothed her in his own righteousness, and pronounced her beautiful.

This woman for whom God did this—she is us.

Do not ask why. Simply say Amen. For what else can one say to the love of God except Amen? Yes, yes, it shall be so. The planks in our eyes and the specks in the eyes of our neighbor, he takes these all with him and attaches them to the bloody wood of his cross. They are gone, forgiven. Our failures, infidelities, greed, selfishness—they melt like ice in the heat of our Father's compassion. We are clean. We are pure. We are beloved of God. Nothing and no one mean more to him than we do. And nothing and no one can change that.

Okay, so we need to cultivate a proper love for others.

We shall not long have love to man if we do not first and chiefly cultivate love to God. - Charles Spurgeon

There are three things I want you to do regarding this idea of loving like God loves.

1. Look at people through the eyes of Christ.
2. Look at yourself realistically.
3. Take Spurgeon's counsel and cultivate love to God. When you do, you will love like God.

Review - Love Because God Is Love

- Love One Another
- Love Like God

3. Love In God's Place (vs. 11-12)

1 John 4:11–12 ESV

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

These verses take “loving like God” to the next level. You actually, whether you realize it or not, represent God.

2 Corinthians 5:18–20 ESV

¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

God is working through us!

Ephesians 3:20–21 ESV

*²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, **according to the power at work within us**, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

And the way we can truly be impactful for Christ is to allow His power to work through us as we determine to love others.

Here are some questions to consider as we think through verses 11-12...

How much did God love us?

Romans 5:8 ESV

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What a profound motivation for loving someone else.

And when we love someone else the way that God loves us, do you know what happens?

God becomes visible through your love. God is seen!

You make God appear loud and clear!

It has been said of Christians that **“you may be the only Christ someone ever sees.”**

What a glorious responsibility!

But notice one last thing in verse twelve.

“if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.”

Well, what does that mean?

If we love one another, God's love will dwell within us. We will live in it as His love lives in us.

The word "perfected" means "mature" or "complete."

The NIV Grace and Truth Study Bible Chapter 4

Yet even though God cannot be seen, his presence in us is made known to all when believers sacrificially love one another in tangible ways. In a sense, believers show the existence of the invisible God by the outworking of divine love in our lives toward others. This is how God reveals himself and how his love is made complete in his people.

Christian, you and I have the amazing privilege of loving others like God has loved us.

We actually get to represent God with our lives.

Just as Jesus said to Philip, *'When you have seen me, you have seen the Father,'* so it should be said of us that when others see us, they have seen Jesus.

How? What does this look like practically?

Show Compassion and Empathy: Understanding and caring for the feelings of others, especially those who are suffering, reflect God's love.

Serve Others Selflessly: Volunteering your time and resources to help those in need without expecting anything in return is a powerful way to show love.

Invest in Relationships: Spend quality time with family, friends, and community members, and work on building strong, loving relationships.

Review - Love Because God Is Love

- Love One Another
- Love Like God
- Love In God's Place

Conclusion

Larry and his Muslim Neighbors in Florida - Ahmad & Hyatt Laroussi (dream)

Your love, a genuine love for those who enter your life, can leave an enduring imprint on their hearts. You might be the only Bible they ever read or the only image of Christ they ever see. You are the embodiment of God's love, His love with skin on. Love them with a passion that can only originate from Him. And when they yearn to meet the God they've seen in you, rejoice, for His love has worked through you.

So, let us rise to the calling, embracing everyone we meet with a compassion that reflects God's own love; let our actions become living testimonies of His grace, for in loving others, we fulfill His greatest command."

I'll be down front after the service if you would like me to pray with you and for you for whatever you might be dealing with today.

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. **Who are you praying for daily?**
2. **Who are you engaging with weekly?**
3. **Who are you sharing the gospel with monthly?**