

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“The Taste Test”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 1 John 4:7-13; 1 Jn. 1:5; 2:3-6; 3:10-24; Matt. 7:15-23; Lk. 6:43-46; John 13:34-35; 1:18; 3:16; Gal. 5:22-24; Rom 5:6-8; 1 Cor. 13:1-13; 2 Pet. 1:8; Rev. 2:4-5

There is a difference between what is written on the label and what is actually inside the jar. Something can be labeled sweet, healthy, fresh, or rich, but the taste test reveals what is really there. In the same way, John has already told us, “Loved ones, don’t trust every spirit, but test the spirits.” There is the test of the message: does this spirit confess this Yeshua, Messiah Yeshua who has come in the flesh? Does it listen to the apostolic message of the New Covenant Scriptures, the message that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all? Does it call us to trust in Yeshua and to walk in His commandments?

But now John brings us to another test—the taste test, the test of the fruit. Yeshua said we would recognize false prophets by their fruit. Not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord,” enters the kingdom, but the one who does the will of the Father. Not everyone who calls Him “Master, Master” is actually walking in His ways. So John says, *“Loved ones, let us love one another, for love is from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”* (1 Jn. 4:7). The question is not merely, “What do we say?” but “What is being produced in us?” What is the taste test of our lives?

1. LOVE COMES FROM GOD

John begins with the family resemblance: *“Loved ones, let us love one another, for love is from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”* (1 Jn. 4:7). Love is *ek tou Theou*—out of God, from God. It comes from Him. Therefore, those who have been born of God are also defined by love for others. Like father, like son. Like Father, like children. If we have been born from above, then what flows out of us should bear the family resemblance of the One who gave us new birth.

The love of those who have been born of God is not love as the world defines it. And it’s not simply describing everyone loving in whatever way pleases them. Those born of God are to love as God defines love. John has already said, *“It is clear who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil by this—anyone who does not act righteously or love his brother is not of God”* (1 Jn. 3:10). He also said, *“Children, let us not love with word or talk, but in deed and truth!”* (1 Jn. 3:18). So this love is not merely sentimental language or religious vocabulary. It is the actual fruit of a life that has truly been born of God.

2. LOVE IS DEFINED BY GOD

John continues, *“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love”* (1 Jn. 4:8). This is one of the best-known statements in Scripture, even among people who are not Bible readers. But it is also often misunderstood, because love as the world defines it is

distorted. Some define love as a feeling, a romance, a commitment, or an abstraction that is hard to define but easy to recognize. Worldly love is often self-centered – based on how a person makes *ME* feel. But through John, the Spirit does not leave love open to whatever meaning we want to pour into it. If God is love, then love is defined by God.

So how is God's love defined? John points us to the revelation of love revealed by Yeshua: *"The love of God was revealed among us by this—that God sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him"* (1 Jn. 4:9). This is love: not first that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atonement for our sins. God's love was not a love of response to our love. His love, demonstrated in Yeshua, loved us **FIRST**, when we didn't deserve it – while we were still operating as God's enemies! His love selflessly took the initiative! It was not demonstrated as a love that *takes*, centered on what it would do for *HIM* – but rather, it was revealed in Yeshua as a love that gives, centered on what it would do for those He loves. *"God SO LOVED the world"* (John 3:16) and *"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Messiah died for us"* (Romans 5:8). What is love? Look at Yeshua. Love gives. Love sacrifices self. Love pours out for the one(s) He loves.

3. LOVE REVEALS GOD THROUGH US

John then says, *"Loved ones, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"* (1 Jn. 4:11). If God loved us in this way, then we owe it, we are obligated, we are indebted to love one another. Our selfish sinful nature doesn't like that word, "obligated" – "ought". But that word "ought" is not meant to crush us with condemnation. Rather, it is meant to call us into the family way. If He loved us when we did not deserve it, if He loved us to life, if He gave Himself as an atonement for our sins, then we **ought** to walk as He walked. John has already said, *"Whoever claims to abide in Him must walk just as He walked"* (1 Jn. 2:6). And again, *"We have come to know love by this—Yeshua laid down His life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters"* (1 Jn. 3:16).

Then John says, *"No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and His love is made perfect in us"*(1 Jn. 4:12). No one has ever seen God, but Yeshua has made Him known. And now, as we love one another with the love He has poured into us, God's character is revealed through us. His love is made complete in us; it reaches its goal in us. We know that we abide in Him and He in us because He has given us of His Spirit. The fruit of His Spirit at work in our lives is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (in ever-increasing measure – 2 Peter 1:8). So the taste test is not merely the label we carry, but the fruit being produced. Is the life of Messiah being revealed through us?

CONCLUSION

The taste test of our lives should be an expression of love that is more than words. It should be sacrificial at its core, a giving of self, a willingness to be inconvenienced, a willingness to meet the needs of others when we encounter them. This does not mean shallow sentimentality or forced intimacy. It means redemptive love. It means forgiving

those who need our forgiveness, just as God forgave us in Messiah. It means giving our time, our resources, our attention, and our lives in ways that reveal the character of God to a hurting and broken world.

Loved ones, we all fall short. But the call is not to conceal and hide from view our lack of love or excuse the me-firstness that so easily feels normal. Rather, the call is to bring our hearts before the Lord. If we have lost the love we had at first, let us repent and return. (Rev. 2:4-5). If our label says “God is love,” but the taste test of our lives has been impatience, harshness, pride, self-protection, resentment, or indifference, then today is the day to come back to Him. Yeshua gave Himself for us. He loved us first. Let us receive His mercy, surrender our hearts again, and ask the Holy Spirit to produce in us the love that comes from God. Loved ones, let us love one another.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. John says that love is “from God.” How does this help us understand the difference between biblical love and the way the world often defines love?
2. In what ways can someone have the right “label” spiritually, but fail the “taste test” of love in daily life?
3. John says, “*If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*” (1 Jn. 4:11). What does that “ought” or indebtedness look like without becoming condemnation?
4. Where in your current relationships is God calling you to love not just in word or talk, but in deed and truth?
5. What fruit is being produced in your life right now—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—or something else? What would it look like to bring that honestly before the Lord?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, thank You for loving us first. Thank You for sending Your unique Son, Messiah Yeshua, into the world so that we might live through Him. Thank You that love is not something we have to define for ourselves, but something You have revealed and defined in Yeshua, who selflessly gave Himself as an atonement for our sins when we were still operating as His enemies.

Lord, forgive us for the ways we have loved only in word or talk, while closing our hearts to the needs of others. Forgive us for me-firstness, impatience, resentment, pride, and indifference. By Your Spirit, produce in us the fruit that comes from You. Teach us to walk as Yeshua walked, to love as He loved, and to reveal Your character to the world around us. Make Your love complete in us.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.