

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“Love Moves from the Invisible into the Visible”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 1 John 4:19-21; 1 Jn. 4:7-18; 1 Jn. 1:6-7; 1 Jn. 2:9-11; 1 Jn. 3:10-18; Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:13-18; Lk. 10:25-37; Eph. 4:14-15; Rom. 5:8

John brings us to one of the clearest and most confronting truths in the whole letter: “*We love, because He first loved us.*” Love does not begin with us. It does not originate in our personality, our effort, our sentiment, or even our good intentions. True love begins with God because God is love. He loved first, He moved first, He gave first, and He revealed His love most fully by sending Messiah Yeshua as the atonement for our sins.

That means the love of God is never meant to remain only an invisible idea, an internal feeling, or a statement we make with our mouths. God’s love became visible in Messiah. The invisible God revealed His love in a visible, tangible, sacrificial way. And now John says that same love is to become visible through us. If we say we love God, but hatred, contempt, and coldness toward our brother remain untouched in our hearts, John does not soften the words: we are lying. Love that has truly come from God must move from the invisible into the visible.

1. WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US

John says, “*We love, because He first loved us.*” This summarizes the relationship between divine love and human love. We are able to love because God loved first. Love is not something we invented, manufactured, or discovered on our own. Even when we see echoes of love in the world, those echoes exist because humanity was made in the image of God. But true, pure, complete love flows from Him.

Earlier in this same passage, John tells us what love is: “*This is love—not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atonement for our sins.*” Love is not first defined by what we feel toward God, but by what God has done for us in Messiah. He did not wait until we were worthy. He did not wait until we were lovable. He demonstrated His love while we were still sinners. Messiah gave Himself for us, and that is the pattern of love now being formed in us. So when John says we love because He first loved us, he is saying that our love is an overflow. God’s love has been poured into us, and now it must pour out from us. If His love abides in us, it cannot remain locked away in religious language or private devotion. It must become visible in how we treat real people, especially the brothers and sisters God has placed in front of us.

2. LOVE FOR GOD CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM LOVE FOR OUR BROTHER

John continues, “*If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar.*” That is strong language, but it is consistent with everything John has been saying throughout the letter. In chapter 1, he says that if we claim to have fellowship with God while walking in darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. In chapter 2, he says that the one who

claims to be in the light while hating his brother is still in darkness. In chapter 3, he says it becomes clear who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil by whether we practice righteousness and love our brother. John's point is not that love is merely a nice addition to faith. Love is evidence of whether the life of God is truly at work in us. We cannot claim to love the unseen God while refusing to love the brother or sister we can see. John says the one who does not love his brother whom he *has* seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. Those two realities cannot be separated.

This does not mean love is always easy. Sometimes loving people is painfully difficult. Some people wound us, frustrate us, misunderstand us, or resist us. But John is not describing shallow sentimentality. He is describing the love that comes from God: a love that is truthful, sacrificial, and whole. This is why he has already said, *"Children, let us not love with word or talk, but in deed and truth."* Love must become more than something spoken. It must become something practiced.

3. LOVE IS VISIBLE, TRUTHFUL, AND TANGIBLE

The command to love God and love our neighbor is not new. It goes all the way back to the Torah. Moses declared, *"Hear O Israel, ADONAI our God, ADONAI is one. Love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* And in Leviticus, the command comes: *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* But Leviticus does not leave that love vague. It shows what love looks like in daily life: do not oppress your neighbor, do not rob him, do not withhold wages, do not curse the deaf, do not place a stumbling block before the blind, do not show favoritism in judgment, do not slander, do not endanger your neighbor, do not hate your brother in your heart, do not take vengeance, and do not bear a grudge.

That means **biblical love is not merely emotional warmth**. It is righteousness expressed relationally. At the same time, love does not mean avoiding all discomfort. Scripture says a loving father disciplines his child. Paul says we are to speak the truth in love. Sometimes love warns. Sometimes love rebukes. Sometimes love calls someone away from danger. A toddler walking toward a pool may be startled by a alarmed voice calling them back, but what feels like a harsh warning springs from genuine love. However, we must continually ask the Lord to purify our motives. We do not want to use "truth" as a mask for harshness, and we do not want to use "love" as an excuse for cowardice. God's love is both truthful and merciful.

Yeshua makes this visible in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Torah lawyer wanted to know where the line was: *"Who is my neighbor?"* But Yeshua did not answer by shrinking the command. He told of a wounded man left half-dead, religious people who passed by, and a Samaritan who stopped, had compassion, bandaged wounds, carried the man, paid the cost, and promised to return. Love became visible. Love became costly. Love moved from thought to action, from word to deed, from the invisible into the visible.

CONCLUSION

John's question presses deeply into us: can we say we love God while harboring hatred, contempt, bitterness, or indifference toward our brother? We may be able to fool others. We may even be able to fool ourselves for a while. But God sees the heart. He knows whether our love is merely spoken or truly being formed in us by His Spirit. The answer is not to manufacture love in our own strength. The answer is to return to the One who loved us first. We bring our hearts into His light. We ask Him to show us where hatred has been hiding under spiritual language, where fear has been shaping our reactions, where wounds have hardened into contempt, and where love needs to become visible through obedience.

We love because He first loved us. And because He first loved us, our love must become more than words. It must become mercy. It must become truth. It must become sacrifice. It must become the visible evidence that the invisible God abides in us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where has God's love been most clearly made visible in your own life?
2. Is there someone you say you love, but your actions, attitude, or avoidance tell a different story?
3. Are there places where you have used "truth" as a cover for harshness, or "love" as a cover for avoiding necessary truth?
4. What would it look like this week for the love of God to move from the invisible into the visible through you?
5. Who is the Lord calling you to pray blessing over, especially if that person has hurt, frustrated, or disappointed you?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, thank You for loving us first. Thank You for revealing Your love through Messiah Yeshua, who gave Himself for us while we were still sinners. We confess that too often our love remains only in words, intentions, or feelings. Search our hearts and expose anything in us that is hatred, contempt, bitterness, fear, or indifference.

Teach us to love as You love. Let Your love be made complete in us. Help us to speak the truth in love, to show mercy with action, to forgive where we have been holding grudges, and to serve where we have been passing by. May Your invisible love become visible through our lives, so that others may see You abiding in us.

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