

## **How Can We Not Love**

### **1 John 4:7-12**

**The word love dominates 1 John 4:7–5:3. It appears over 30 times.**

**Paul is the apostle of faith. Peter is the apostle of hope.**

**James is the apostle of good works. And John is the apostle of love.**

### **What Does The Bible Say?**

7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7 NLT)

### **Loving Others Gives Evidence We Have Been Born of God.**

8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:8 NLT)

### **Loving Others Gives Evidence We Know God.**

**This is John's beautiful logic: (1) God is love. (2) Those who have been born of God and know God are God's children. (3) God's children have God's nature. (4) God's children, therefore, will love. Love's source is in God, and as we love like God loves, we give evidence we are connected to the source. We demonstrate by a life of love that we know God.**

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. (1 John 4:9 NLT)

**God Sent His Son That We Might Live.**

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. (1 John 4:10 NLT)

## **God Sent His Son That He Might Die.**

**First, God loved us before we loved Him. In fact He loved us when we spurned Him.**

**Second, He proved His love by sending His Son.**

8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8 NLT)

## **How Can You Obey?**

11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. (1 John 4:11 NLT)

## **God's Love for Us Inspires Us to Love Others.**

12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. (1 John 1:12 NLT)

**Our Love for Others shows God to others.**

**Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

**Explore:**

**KEY TRUTHS:**

- 1. God Is Perfect Love (1 John 4:7-19)**
- 2. God Loves All People Because His Nature Is Love (Psalm 40:1-17)**

**3. God Has Shown Us What Love Is (Ephesians 2:1-10 ;  
Romans 5:6-11 ;John 3:16-17)**

**HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the Bible:** We find examples of God's perfect love all through the Bible.

**Explore:**

If we were to ask a number of people to define the term Love, we would likely get a variety of answers. We might say we love our spouse, but then say we love a good hamburger. Many of those answers would revolve around emotions. But what is the

deepest and purest kind of love? The answer to that question is found in the Bible.

### **God Is Perfect Love (1 John 4:7-19)**

Love is not an immaterial idea that exists on its own, nor is it merely a human construct. As 1 John 4:7- 8 clearly declares, love finds its origins in the very nature of God. Rather than arbitrarily determining what to do, all the actions of God are a consistent, natural outflow of His unchanging character. He does not decide to love. He is love. His nature defines love. He is the standard of love.

This reality has two natural outflows. First, rightly knowing God enables us to rightly love others. The best of intentions isn't enough. The heart of man is wicked and deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), often causing us to misunderstand what is good and what is bad (Proverbs 14:12). Although people may strive to love, without a proper relationship with God and the perspective it

gives, their understanding of love is distorted and falls woefully short of genuine satisfaction. Our knowledge of love comes from God (1 John 4:19) and it breaks down when we attempt to separate it from His person. First John 4:7-10 and 13-16 speak of knowing God through Jesus Christ, with each section followed by a declaration that such a path is how love is perfected (able to be understood and expressed correctly) (verses 12, 17-18). That is why knowing God through Jesus Christ and growing in Christlikeness is the key to real success in any relationship.

Secondly, loving others enables us to know God rightly. First John 4:12 and 16 each speak of loving one another as the path to having God abide in us. This is the same idea found in James 4:8. We draw near to God through obedience to Him and then His presence is magnified and perfected in our lives. God is love, and therefore He loves. Both the action and the motive (God does because He is) are important. This is also true for us. We

must know God in order to know what love is and how it should work. Then, as we practice that love we see the wisdom of His ways as love is perfected, and we worship Him all the more, spurring us on toward even greater obedience.

### **Explore:**

First Corinthians 13 discusses the importance of love in bringing value to any service for God. In verse 13 Paul declared that love is greater even than faith or hope. Why is this so? Here are two related ways of explaining it:

1) Faith and hope are temporary, but love is eternal. Once a disciple arrives in the presence of God, there will be no need for faith, since faith will have been made sight. There will also be no need for hope, as there will be nothing to long for anymore.

We will, however, dwell with love incarnate in the person of God and reside in a state of perfect love forever.



2) Love has a vertical, divine origin. God gave us what was necessary to express faith in Him and the knowledge of something greater to hope for, both during this life (a better way of life) and for the life to come (eternal life). Love, on the other hand, comes directly from the nature of God. God does not need faith or hope, but He is love and does love.

### **Explore:**

### **God Loves All People Because His Nature Is Love**

#### **(Psalm 40:1-17)**

All God's actions are consistent with His character. Since He is love, His actions bear this out. All God does toward us can and should be understood in light of His nature as love (Psalm 40:5). His care and compassion are evident in the very existence of any knowledge of Him or relationship with Him. Psalm 40:1-2 reminds us that He condescended to us in our sinful state and

washed us whiter than snow. He gives us new life and a secure hope where there was only the pit of despair.

This new life elicits praise (verse 3a) because the wisdom and value of His ways are self-evident to those who put them into practice (verses 3b-4, 9-10). In calling us away from the deception of our sin and to a life of holiness, God is not seeking to limit our pleasure and saddle us with a burdensome existence, but rather He is loving us by rescuing us from ourselves and showing us what is truly good. All love and goodness finds its source in God. As He reveals Himself to us, He is giving us the great gift of knowing what love and goodness really are. Thus, His deeds are worthy of wonder, and His goodness toward us is beyond description (verse 5).

He gives us this goodness, not because of who we are or what we've done, but because of who He is. The sacrifices and offerings of the Law were the best we could muster, but they

could never truly be satisfactory (verse 6). Yet God has helped us understand that salvation comes through His gifts of grace and mercy. F. Leroy Forlines, in his book, *The Quest for Truth*, wrote: “When God’s love is manifested toward those in misery and distress, we call it mercy. When God’s love is manifested toward the ill-deserving, we call it grace because the emphasis is on the fact that it is unmerited. God’s love toward sinners is mercy in that they are in misery and distress. It is grace in that they are ill-deserving.”

God wasn’t interested in us based on what we could do for Him.

He doesn’t need us. In fact, our sins are more than can be counted, like hairs on a head (verse 12). Yet in God we find unrestrained mercy that flows from unending love (verse 11).

Although we will always have adversaries in this life based upon who we are or what we do (verses 13-15), God will always be the friend of those who seek Him based upon who He is (verse

16). Only a God who is love incarnate would show such great compassion for such sinful and needy people (verse 17).

**Explore:**

There is a divergence of opinion regarding the reference to the open ear (literally “ears you have dug for me”) in verse 6. Some consider it to refer to the understanding of salvation as a gift through faith, not by works. Others think it may also be a reference to Deuteronomy 15:16- 17 and the practice of boring through the ear of a servant who voluntarily pledged himself to a master even when he could go free (such as in the Year of Jubilee; verse 12), marking lifetime service and acceptance. The latter idea speaks of the willingness of God to accept us and provide for us forever.

**Explore:**

## **God Has Shown Us**

### **What Love Is (Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 5:6-11; John 3:16-17)**

God blesses us so we can be a blessing to others. The gift of His love is no different. He has given us His love, shown us what real love is characterized by, and then given us the privilege of sharing Him and His love with others. He has shown us what love really is and we must love as God loves.

God demonstrates that love isn't based upon merit (Ephesians 2:1-10). God has created us for and called us to a life of good works (verse 10). The purpose of those good works isn't to earn our right standing with Him (verses 8-9), but rather to demonstrate the greatness of His grace to all people (verses 4-7).

We must remember that though our conduct may have changed since we gave our lives to Christ, that doesn't mean our

worthiness has changed. The only thing that has made us any better than we were (verse 1-3) is Christ. All of this must inform the way we demonstrate His love to others.

The good works we have been called to must accurately demonstrate who God is if they are to be of any value to His kingdom (Matthew 5:16). That means we must love all people. No one has to earn the love of God. Neither should they have to earn ours. Those without Christ cannot live as those who know Him, and we must not expect them to.

God demonstrates that love is sacrifice (Romans 5:6-11). God showed us the pure essence of love in the death of Christ for unworthy sinners (verse 8). Real love always involves a cost. The cost of love is magnified when the recipient is difficult to love (verses 6-8). Yet this is exactly what God says real love looks like, sacrificing whatever it takes to administer grace and mercy to others, even our enemies (verse 10). David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), rightly understood the link between

love, sacrifice, and worship when he said he would not make an offering to the Lord that cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24).

Christ offered the sacrifice of love as the supreme act of worship to God. We must do the same if we are to properly demonstrate who God is to the world.

God demonstrates that love is to be our primary motive (John 3:16-17). God is love. It is what God does; it explains His behavior. Love is what motivated God to send His only Son to suffer and die for sinners (verse 16). Yes, His judgment will come and the death and resurrection of Christ will be the basis for that judgment, but it was the hope of redemption that was the goal (verse 17).

Since it is God's great motive, love should be our primary motive for obedience in order for true worship to occur. It is the basis for the first and second greatest commandments (love God and love others), and everything God commands must flow from

love (Matthew 22:37-40). To demonstrate God, we must demonstrate love in all things.

### **Explore:**

John Piper speaks of the idea of Christian Hedonism, which basically states that we find our greatest satisfaction when God is most glorified in our lives. He explains that God wants us to be full of joy and to be content. The pursuit of these things is a good, God-given endeavor. That pursuit of joy and contentment is meant to drive us to God and worship Him supremely in all of life, since His glory is the only thing that can truly satisfy us. As we demonstrate God's love properly, we will find great satisfaction. To read more about this concept/philosophy, visit: [bit.ly/ Christian-Hedonism](http://bit.ly/Christian-Hedonism). A great resource for growing in godliness to love Him and others better is the book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney.



## **Explore:**

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ-followers. When they do,

Heaven will rejoice!

**Question 1 of 4**

Give the title or some lyrics from love songs.

**Question 2 of 4**

How does knowing God better help us love others better?

**Question 3 of 4**

What is the difference between knowing about God and knowing God personally as Father? Why is love a good test for whether someone knows God?

**Question 4 of 4**

How does John see a bloody cross as the highest expression of love?