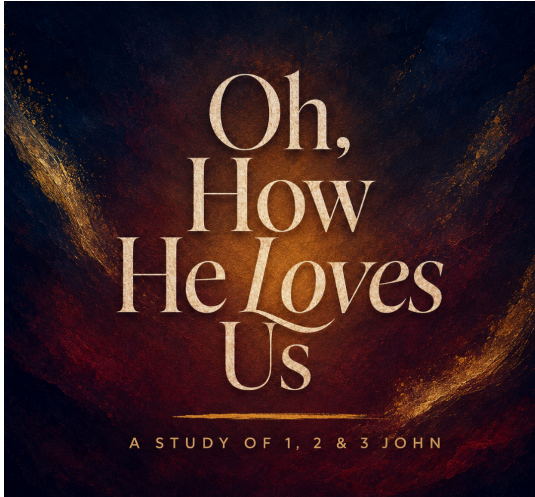




How He Loves Us

One word defines the message of 1, 2, & 3 John: Love. Specifically, God's sacrificial and perfect agape Love. This love is so perfect and so powerful, it does not lead us the way it finds us. It transforms us. It marks us. In this small group series, we will see how God's agape love for his people transforms us and every part of our lives.

WEEK THREE

Because God loves me, I will not love the world

Message Passage: 1 John 2:15-17, 1 John 5:18-19, & Luke 18:18-25

Small Group Passage: John 15:18-25

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

Overview of the series: We have received the agape love of God. A love that is defined by sacrifice, choice, and placing the needs of others first. The question is: how will we respond to this love?

- **Wk 1** - Will we love God in return? Will we respond to God's sacrificial love by rejecting any and all false teachings that are opposed to God? If the Gospel is the expression of God's love, we will reject any false gospel.
- **Wk 2** - Jesus showed the love he had for us by his actions, his obedience. Will we reciprocate that love by obeying his commands?

So far, we have been talking about God's love for us and how we reciprocate that love back to God. **The vertical.**

This week and next week... We will be shifting gears to discuss how God's love impacts how we interact with the world and those around us.

THE WORLD

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.*

The command - Do not love the world!! In fact, do not love anything in the world. And if you do love the world, the love of God (the Father) is not in you. You have to give it to John; he made sure that his point was made loud and clear. Why was this such a black-and-white issue for the Apostle John? Because he was clear on what Jesus had given him and what the world had to offer.

Everything that God has given us is good. He gives us good gifts (Matt 7:11).

- Our Hope... from God (John 14:27)
- Our adoption... from God (Eph 1:5)
- Eternal life... also from God (John 10:28-30)

The world has something else to offer us.

1 John 2:16 *For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.*

Lust of the flesh - it promises to satisfy legitimate desires in illegitimate ways (the lust of the flesh). Eating is legitimate; gluttony is worldly. Sex is legitimate; immorality is worldly.

Lust of the eyes - the world tempts your mind through what your eyes see. The biblical word for this is covetousness.

Pride - there is the pride in one's possessions (2:16)—that is, living to impress others.¹

1 John 2:17 *The world and its desires pass away,...*

And to cap it all off, none of this lasts! The joy of sin does not last. The joy that this world offers does not last. But even more so, this life itself does not last forever. It is like a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow (James 4:14). Our earthly possessions are temporary, as one day they will be useless (Matt 6:19-21).

1 John 2:17 *but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

But what Jesus gives us is forever, because he gives us eternal life (1 John 1:2 & 5:13). And he gives it freely to all who believe in Him (John 3:16). John was not saying

¹ Tony Evans, The Tony Evans Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019), 1373

that doing the will of God merits eternal life. Instead, he was stating that obedience to God is a key outward sign that God has done eternal work in our lives, as was discussed last week.

1 John 5:18-19 *We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. **19** We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

The world is currently under the dominion of the evil one (Satan). For the sole reason that God has temporarily allowed him to (Luke 22:53). This control/power will one day come to an end (Rev 20:10). Until then, we can rest assured that the enemy can not take away what only God gave us (vs 18).

SHOULD I HATE THE WORLD?

Many Christians have read these passages and understood this to mean that they are to hate the world. They become cold, judgmental, and isolated as they see the world around them as a nuisance at best. I believe that this misses the point.

Instead, **what the Apostle John teaches is that Jesus, who loves us perfectly, should not compete with the world for our love.** Where did John learn this? He learned this years, decades earlier, while Jesus was still alive, from a fateful interaction Jesus had with a man who had gained much from the world.

Luke 18:18-21 *A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” **19** “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. **20** You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” **21** “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.*

The man was asking the right question. In fact, he was arguably asking the best question that has ever been asked. The problem was that the man had a misguided confidence in his own righteousness, claiming to have kept all of the commandments since he was a boy. He had, in fact, not. However, the good teachers that he was speaking to had, because he was, in fact, God.

Luke 18:22 *When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Was Jesus here claiming that selling all of your possessions was required for salvation? No! Neither selling possession nor obedience to the law gives us salvation (Gal 2:21). We are saved by grace through faith alone (Eph 2:8-9). But **Jesus, being God, knew exactly what was in the man's heart. He knew what he loved!**

Luke 18:23-25 *When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."*

This was not a condemnation of riches and wealth. **This was a condemnation of a love of the riches of this world that fills our hearts so much that there is little room to love God**, much less love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

John's connection - That day, the apostle John learned a valuable lesson about what it means to respond rightly to God's agape love. As he listened to this conversation, he learned that if our response to God's love is divided, it is also insufficient. We can not love God and the world, or the things of this world (Mathew 6:24). We must choose one or the other.

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.*

We can love God, or we can love the world. But we can not love God and the world. We can not have a divided heart (Ps 86:11).

To help us make the decision, we must remember that God loved us perfectly, sacrificially, and he loves us despite the fact that we have nothing to offer.

Small Group Transition—The world does none of these things. In a small group, we are going to see that the world does the opposite. The Apostle John makes it abundantly clear that we should expect the world to misunderstand us and even oppose our God and his kingdom. Do we know how to love God fully while we live in a world that rejects God?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think John uses such strong, black-and-white language in 1 John 2:15? What do you think is at stake if our love for God becomes divided?

Leader Note: If our love for God is divided, we by default have an idol problem. This is why John ended his letter, which was all about God's agape love, with this warning, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

2. What is the difference between enjoying something God has given us and loving that thing in a way that competes with our love for God?
3. Have you ever seen Christians become so concerned about not loving the world that they became isolated, judgmental, or unloving toward people? What was missing from their understanding?

Leader Note: As a follow-up question, you can ask, "How do we keep ourselves from adopting the same mindset and habits?"

Read: John 15:18-25

4. Vs 18. "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." How was Jesus misunderstood and hated in his own day? Does a version of that same misunderstanding or hatred exist today?
5. Vs. 19-21, "hate" is a strong word, but John used it here because that is what he meant. What God-honoring commandments, principles, and ideals are hated today?
6. Vs 21, The world is opposed to Jesus because it is filled with people who do not know Christ. Yet! We are still sent out into the world (John 17:18). To be a light to the world (Matt 5:14-16). So that the world may know Christ (John 3:16). What does it look like to go out into the world with the hope of Jesus, even though the world is opposed to that hope?

Leader Note: Jesus' instructions to his disciples as he sent them out into the countryside are very valuable here (Matt 10:5-15, Mark 7:7-13, & Luke 9:1-6). In these passages, Jesus taught key principles that help us navigate being sent out into a hostile world.

- Rejection should not be taken personally. They are not rejecting you; they are rejecting Christ. Their rejection is not your fault.
- Rejection should not surprise us. Christ was rejected throughout his life.
- Rejection should not deter us from taking the hope of Christ out into the world. While some may reject Christ, others will believe in Him and be brought into the family of God.

- The world may be hostile, but it is still the mission field (Matt 28:19-20, Acts 1:8). Therefore, we must adopt Christ's way of seeing the world through the lens of compassion because they are "sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:35-28).
7. Vs 25, We should not be surprised when the world is opposed to God's kingdom. Jesus warned his followers in advance (John 15:18). John even clarifies that this hatred and opposition were in fulfillment of prophecy (vs 25). How should this shape how we view and respond to the world's opposition to our faith/

PRAYER TIME

DISMISS