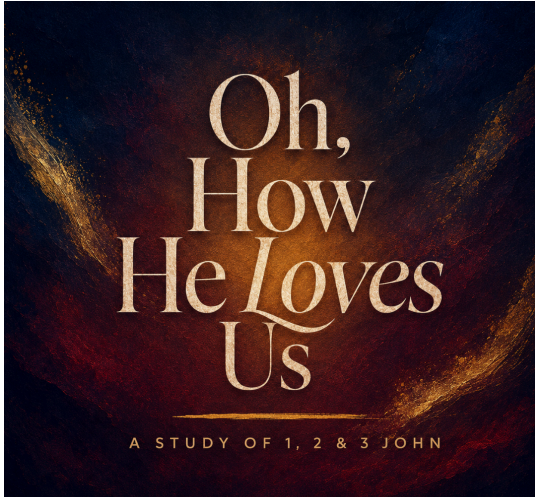




How He Loves Us

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 FOUR

Because God loves me, I love others

Message Passage: 1 John 2:9-11, 1 John 4:7-12, 1 John 4:19-21, & 3 John 1-4

Small Group Passage: 1 John 3:11-18

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 and his obedience. Will we reciprocate that love by obeying his commands?
- **Wk 3** - 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).

But what else does the Apostle John tell us is a fitting response to God's agape love? Take a look....

LOVE PEOPLE

1 John 2:9-11 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. 10 Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. 11 But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

Once again, John leaves no room for misunderstanding. If we do hate a brother or sister in Christ, we walk in darkness and therefore do not walk with God. Yet if we love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we walk in the light, in righteous obedience. As with so many of the themes in John's letters, he comes back to them again and again.

1 John 4:7-12 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

If we do not love others, especially brothers and sisters in Christ, while claiming to have the Love of God, we have missed the boat. **Loving people is not a bonus. It is not optional.** Many people would say I do love God. But I'm not sure about people. Can't I do that? Short answer. No. Long answer, keep reading.

1 John 4:19-21 We love because he first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

The problem is that if you began to ask Christians if they love people, they would almost all say yes. Likewise, if you asked the same group of Christ followers if they hated people, they would say, "Of course not." But are self-assessments true? Do they know what loving and hating people look like? In many cases, no.

But in John's third letter, we see both Christ-like agape love and hatred on display.

3 John 1-4 The elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

2 Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. **3** It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. **4** I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Gaius - We do not know much about Gaius or his role in the church. But we do know so much about his faith and love for others because his reputation went before him.

3 John 5-8 Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. **6** They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. **7** It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. **8** We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.

The strangers (brothers and sisters) being spoken of were likely traveling ministers and evangelists whom John knew or even sent himself. **Even though Gaius did not know them, he welcomed them with open arms.** He put food on the table for them and gave them a warm place to stay as they did the work of the ministry. He showed his love for them through his actions.

We learn some things about what it means and what it looks like to love others

1. Love is shown through actions
2. Love is shown through sacrificial actions
3. Love is shown through sacrificial actions to people with nothing to offer

3 John 9-10 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. **10** So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

Diotrephus was likely a leader in the church, as Gaius was. But he was cut from a different cloth. He was known for his love, but it was a love for being first, for being seen and heard. This led him to shut out the traveling ministers from the local church, likely because he did not want the spotlight taken away from him.

What do we learn from all of this? A couple of things, chief among them, are that it does not matter whether we claim to love people. Our actions are another story. Our actions are where we see God's love lived out because God loved us through His actions.

He showed enslaved Israel that he loved them by delivering them from their Egyptian slave holder. He showed young David that he loved him by protecting him while Saul chased him in the wilderness. He showed the remnant of Israel in exile by returning them to the Promised Land.

Transition to small groups - If our God showed us love through his actions, then we will show love to the people around us through our actions, especially when those actions require a sacrifice and we receive nothing in return.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How has what you have learned and discussed in this series changed how you view God's love for you and how you should respond to it?
2. Who are the people you naturally find easiest to love? Who are the people who require more intentionality from you? Why?
3. Why is loving someone who has nothing to offer us in return such a good test of whether our love is a reflection of God's love?

Leader Note: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). God's love for us was demonstrated while we were sinners. When we were far from God, he loved us by sending his Son Jesus to die for us. God's agape love was shown to us when we had nothing to offer Him. If we only love those who have something to offer, we are falling short of reflecting His love.

Read: 1 John 3:11-18

4. Who is someone that you know personally, and how could you help them in a practical way? How could you show them love through your actions?

Leader Note: It is important to resist the temptation to do nothing because you cannot solve their entire problem. Instead, we should do what we can with what we have for those we can help. It is also important to resist the temptation to do nothing, because you cannot help everyone. Instead, we do for one what we wish we could do for all.

5. Vs 18. Who in your life showed that they love you through their actions? What did they do?

Leader Note: Many of the things that people did that helped us know that we were loved were small actions of kindness. Oftentimes, they were unaware of the impact it had on us. Let this be a reminder that we are called to show love to one another on a daily basis in the smallest of things. Loving others is a lifestyle that permeates every area of our lives and actions.

6. Who is one person God may be calling you to love through a specific action this week—and what would that action cost you?

PRAYER TIME

DISMISS