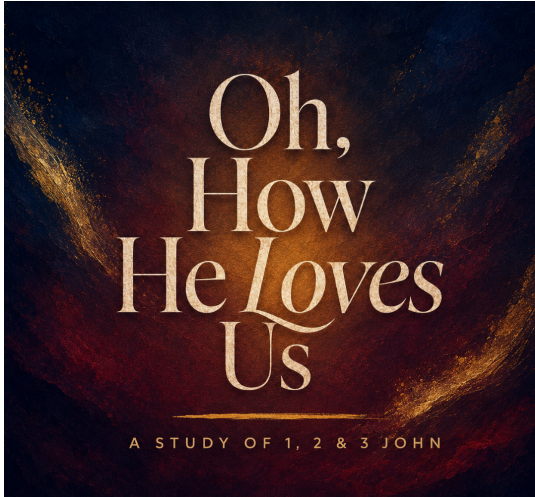




How He Loves Us

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 ONE

Because God loves me, I test every teaching

Message Passage: 1 John 4:7-16 & 1 John 5:21

Small Group Passage: 1 John 4:1-6

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

One word defines the message of 1, 2, & 3 John: Love. Specifically, God's sacrificial and perfect “agape” Love. **What is that?** How is “agape love” different from other types of love? The essence of agape love is goodwill, benevolence, and willful delight in the object of love. Unlike our English word *love*, *agape* is not used in the New Testament to refer to romantic or sexual love (eros). Nor does it refer to close friendship or brotherly love, for which the Greek word *philia* is used. Agape love involves faithfulness, commitment, and an act of the will. It is distinguished from the other types of love by its lofty moral nature and strong character.¹

1 John 4:7-8 *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*

God is Love! Love comes from God. If we love, it is because we have been born of God and we know God. How can this be? Because God is love. Meaning God is the perfect embodiment of love. God is love because in Him we find love's definition and source.

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/agape-love.html>

The same is not true in reverse. Love is not God. Love does not define God. God defines Love. Specifically, God defines agape love.

The question we want to dive into over the next four weeks is: How are we to respond to God's agape love? To be more specific, how are we to reflect God's agape love? **If we are to reflect the love of God, we must fully understand the nature of God's agape love.**

1 John 4:10 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

His love was first. He loved us before we loved Him. Not only that, but he loved us when we had nothing to offer in return.

His love was sacrificial. So much so that Jesus' death (atoning sacrifice) exemplified it. Atoning means that Jesus' death paid the penalty

1 John 4:11-12 *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.*

His love transforms us: God's love not only justifies us, but it also sanctifies us. Meaning God's love allows us to enter into heaven as forgiven believers. But it also transforms us here and now. It shapes us into a people of God willing to love one another. In this way, it is made complete in us.

1 John 4:13 *This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.*

His love is continual: Jesus loves us so much that he gives us his Spirit. He indwells within us (1 Cor 6:19).

When Jesus told the disciples that he would soon die and be taken away from them, he promised that they would not be left alone as orphans. But the Advocate (the Spirit) would be with them (John 14-15). We do not abandon those we love.

1 John 4:14 *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.*

His love saves, and it doesn't just save a select few. His love is available to the world. God loves the world so much that he sent his only and only Son to die for them (John 3:16).

1 John 4:15 *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.*

His love is relational. Because of how sacrificial God's love is, we can now enter into an eternal relationship with God. Our God desires for us to know Him.

1 John 4:16 *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.*

His love is essential. We must remember the nature of God's love each and every day. We must do this because we have a tendency to drift away from it and forget just how Great the Father's love is for us.

Series Setup: The question is, what do we do with this love? How do we respond to this great love that we never deserved (1 John 3:1)? That is the question that we will be answering each week in this series because that is the question that John answers time and time again in his letter (sermon) to the church. In fact, he answers that question in his closing line of 1 John

1 John 5:21 *Dear children, keep yourselves from idols*

The church John was speaking to was not turning to Greek gods or local pagan deities. The idols they were tempted to turn to were self-proclaimed "Christian" ones. Meaning there were false teachers leading people astray, who claimed to be worshiping and following Jesus, but were following a version of Jesus they had created, with nothing to do with the historical Jesus of the Bible, the man John followed and learned from for three years.

1. Doctrinally, they have compromised the person and work of Jesus Christ. They did not confess Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ (2:22) and denied that Jesus had come in the flesh (4:2-3).
2. Morally, the false teachers minimized the seriousness of sin (1:6-10). They claimed that it was possible to have fellowship with God regardless of one's behavior (1:6).
3. Socially, these heretics failed because their spiritual pride resulted in a lack of brotherly love (2:9, 11).²

² Daniel Akin, "John, Letters From," in Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 937God'sGospel.

Transition to small group: When we fully understand just how great the Father's love for us is, we will test every teaching.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. God's love does not leave us unchanged—it transforms us. Where have you seen God's love change your attitudes, priorities, or relationships?
2. John ends his letter by saying, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (5:21). Why do you think that is such a fitting conclusion after everything he says about God's love?

Leader Transition: God showed his Agape love towards us by sacrificing everything so that we may be redeemed. That is the good news of the Gospel. We see God's love on display through Jesus' death and resurrection. That is why it is such a tragedy when people trade in the love displayed for the True Gospel for the lie of a false Gospel. That is what the Apostle John addresses in tonight's passage.

Read: 1 John 4:1-6

3. Vs 1. When the Apostle John says that we must test every spirit, he is stating that we must test every teaching and teacher to see if what they say is true (of the Spirit of God). How do we go about testing every teaching? How do you know if a teaching is truly false?

Leader Note: One thing to remember is that there is a difference between doctrinal differences that Christians (brothers and sisters in Christ) can disagree on and the heretical teaching that John was warning the church against. The difference between those two is the topic of the next question.

4. Vs 2-3. Any spirit or teaching that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from the Spirit of God and therefore is not true. Jesus' status as the one and only Son of God, redeemer of the world, and long-awaited Messiah is non-negotiable. What are some other non-negotiables of the Christian Faith?

Leader Note: Here are a couple of non-negotiables that I believe must make the list.

- The identity of Christ as the long awaited messiah and atoning sacrifice for our sins is one. John felt so strongly about this non-negotiable that he addressed

those who deny Christ and teach others to do likewise as “antichrists”, plural, in 1 John 2:22-23 & 2 John 7-11.

- The nature of the Gospel as a free gift that is received by grace through faith is foundational to our faith (Eph 2:8-9).
- The nature of the Godhead (Trinity) there is one God in three persons. “God has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.”³

5. Vs 4. What did John mean when he said that the “one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world?” Why is this good news?

Leader Note: The context that the Apostle John was speaking about here was that he who is in us (Jesus) is greater than he who is in the world (Satan). There is no comparison. Our God is greater, and he is for us (Rom 8:31). This is so important to remember when we are confronted with the false teaching and brokenness in the world. Our God is greater. Our Savior has come. The enemy will one day be fully defeated.

6. Where are you most tempted to accept what the world says about Jesus, Christianity, or truth without stopping to test it?
7. What is one practical step you can take this week to become better at recognizing biblical truth and rejecting false teaching?

Leader Note: Both of the questions/answers above should, at some point, wrestle with how we vet and test the teaching that comes through our social media feed. If the group has parents at the table, it may also be beneficial to discuss the danger that false teachings on YouTube and TikTok pose to kids and teenagers.

PRAYER TIME

DISMISS

³ <https://www.parkwaychurch.tv/what-we-believe>