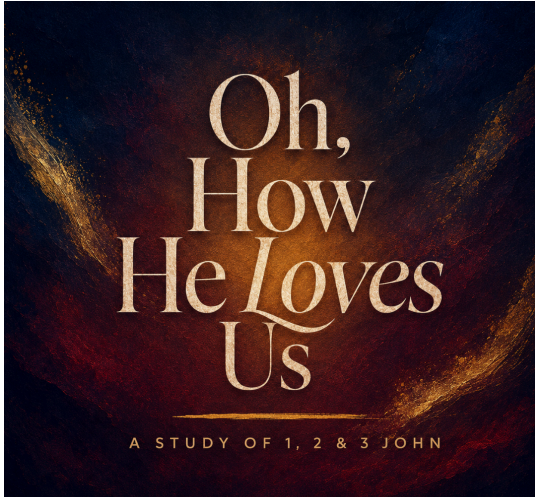




How He Loves Us

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 TWO

Because God loves me, I obey

Message Passage: 1 John 2:3-6, 1 John 3:22-24, 1 John 5:2-3, 1 John 4:9-10, 1 John 4:19, & 1 John 3:1-9

Small Group Passage: 1 John 5:1-5 & 1 John 2:1-6

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

Question: What is a sign that someone is a mature believer in Jesus Christ?

Note: I will likely have groups take time to talk about this at their tables.

1 John 2:3-6 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. **5** But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: **6** Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

1 John 3:22-24 and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. **23** And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. **24** The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

1 John 5:2-3 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. **3** In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

When people see these passages, they get so much wrong about obedience because they misunderstand God's Agape Love.

OBEDIENCE IS A RESPONSE

Obedience is a response to God's love

1 John 4:9-10 *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.*

Jesus was sent into the world so that whoever believed in Him would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16-18). Did the world love Jesus? No. In fact, the world hated Jesus (John 15:23). The world loved darkness instead (John 3:19-20). This means that God's love was first. That is why John said...

1 John 4:19 *We love because he first loved us*

Our love is always a response to God's love. Our obedience is how we show our love for God. But understand that God already loves you, now, Today! Your obedience is a response to God's perfect love.

But it is easy for us to say that we know that, but our actions will always show how fully we understand God's agape love.

1 John 3:1 *See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

Father-like love: God the Father has lavished his love on us. So much so that we are called Children of God. Therefore, God loves us as he does his children.

Disobedience does not forfeit God's love. This was the mistake of the prodigal son.

Obedience does not purchase more of God's love. This was the mistake of the prideful older son.

1 John 3:2-3 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. **3** All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Our Obedience is an imperfect reflection of Christ's perfect obedience. Jesus is perfectly pure. In him there is no sin (1 Pet 2:22). Jesus is pure by his very nature. We, even as believers in Jesus Christ, must do the work of purifying ourselves (Eph 4:22-24).

1 John 3:4-6 *Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. 5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. 6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.*

Obedience is a byproduct of the remaining. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. Meaning those who seek to know Christ more and more each day do not live lives of habitual sin. What is often missed is that the remaining leads to obedience, not the other way around (John 15).

1 John 3:7-9 *Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.*

Obedience over a lifetime is not the same as perfection

There is a difference between sinful mistakes that we respond to with conviction, confession, and repentance, and a life defined by habitual sin that is accompanied by apathy. We, as believers, will sin. We probably won't have to wait long for it to happen. But when we sin, when we make a mistake, what happens next? Godly conviction or apathy. Confession and repentance or treating God's grace as a permission slip (Rom 6:1-3).

HOPE WHEN OBEDIENCE FALLS SHORT

1 John 1:8-9 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and*

*purify us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word is not in us.*

When we sin, and we will sin, we can trust that he is faithful and will forgive us of our sins and continue to do a powerful purifying work in us.

1 John 2:1-2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. **2** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

If we sin, when we sin, we have an Advocate (Jesus Christ) who lived a sinless life, died our death on the cross, and redeemed us by his blood.

Transition to small group: Because I am forgiven. Because I am loved, I will have a God-given desire to live a life of obedience. Yet when I fall short of obedience, I can also trust that I am still loved like a son. In small groups, we are going to talk about what it looks like to live out that truth day by day.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. "Obedience is a response to God's love, not a way to receive God's love. Why do you think that distinction is so easy to understand with our minds but so difficult to live out in practice?"

Leader Note: For some people, God's free gift of love is hard to fully understand and respond to because it differs so drastically from how other people have loved them in the past. Some people make us earn their love as if it were a wage or reward for good behavior. Still others withdraw their love as a way to punish us for what they see as bad behavior. While these versions of "love" may be common, they are a far cry from God's agape love. May we not place limits on God's perfect love because of the failure in how people love one another.

2. Have you ever found yourself trying to earn God's approval through your obedience? What did that look like?

Leader Note: In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14) Jesus pointed out that the faulty belief that obedience earns us more of God's

love led to a prideful heart and an egotistical view of everyone else who falls short of our own standards of being worthy of God's love.

3. How can we take the Apostle John's teaching concerning showing our love for God through obedience seriously without falling into the trap of legalism and perfectionism?

Read: 1 John 5:1-5

4. Vs 1. Many throughout church history have misunderstood John's teaching in this chapter, teaching that salvation is somehow earned, preceded, or validated by obedience to God. In verse one, John clarifies that salvation comes from believing in Christ. Why is it so important that we get this fundamental doctrinal truth right?

Leader Note: In the Gospel of John, we see the word believe used time and time again to be the means by which we receive God's mercy (John 1:12, 3:18, 3:36, 5:24, 6:40, 6:47, 11:25–26, 12:46). The Apostle John makes it abundantly clear that all who believe in Jesus Christ shall not perish but receive eternal life (John 3:16).

5. Vs 2-3. John describes obedience to God as a blessing. That is not the first word we typically associate with "obey." Yet obeying God is just that: a blessing rather than a burden. What can we do to help ourselves see obedience to God this way?

Leader Note: It is not only a blessing when we find ourselves walking in obedience but also when we see others doing likewise. This is why John told the church, "It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us" (2 John 4). This is part of what it means to be a community of believers.

Read: 1 John 2:1-6

6. Vs 1-3. John wrote extensively about obedience as a response to God's love, so that the church would not sin. But that did not mean that faithful believers would never stumble. How do these passages teach us how to respond to our sinful mistakes based on God's agape love?
7. Vs 5. The word "perfected" in verse five means "brought to maturity" in the original language. When we fully understand God's love for us and respond to it with our actions, we are brought to maturity. In what ways have you matured in your faith as you better understand Christ's love and walk with Him?

PRAYER TIME

DISMISS