



NG Study Guide: 1John 4:9-11 “Jesus Reveals God’s Love” 12.20.20 (Christmas Sunday)

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Jesus entered our world to reveal God’s love. God entered our world and became a man to redeem humanity to Himself. Redemption is taking action to save from error or evil. God’s love has an ultimate redemptive purpose. Without Christmas, there would be no Good Friday, and no Resurrection Sunday. Our culture tends to equate “love” with sentiment, attraction, and random acts of kindness, but Jesus reveals a love that is so much more, so that we can become so much more. Let’s consider God’s love so that we can truly love God and neighbors.

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1. Jesus came into the world to reveal God’s love [9-10] What is real love?

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world [9].

The sending of Jesus into our world is the ultimate expression of God’s love. The Apostle John highlights four qualities of God’s love that are worth considering this Christmas, and always:

God’s love is sacrificial [9]

Real love gives sacrificially, and costs something. The measure of one’s love is proportional to the value of what is given.

God sending His only Son reveals His great love, because of the great value of Jesus. Thus, you discover how precious you are to God [Jn.3:16, Jn.10:11, Ph.2:3-8, Gen.22]. Whenever you wonder whether God loves you, you can know that He does because God gave us His best in Jesus [2Cor. 9:15].

God’s love gives life and meets needs [9]

Jesus came so *that we might live through Him*. Life with God is more than physical existence (*bios*). Jesus offers us spiritual life, that is abundant with eternal purpose (*zoe*). Humanity’s greatest need is restoration of life with God. Jesus came not to be served but to serve and give His life at the cross so that people could be redeemed to God [Mk. 10:44-45].

God’s love initiates [10]

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us. Our love is responsive to His love. We love Him, because He first loved us [1Jn. 4:19]. It is not surprising that we should love God, but that He loves

us is remarkable. While we were opposed to God, Jesus came and gave His life for us [Rom. 5:8-10]. Jesus loved the difficult to love, tax collectors, prostitutes, and notorious sinners; and they responded to His love, and continue to do so.

God's love provides forgiveness [10]

God *sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. Jesus paid the penalty for your sins. *Propitiation* means a sacrifice that turns away God's anger or judgment. All of us sin against God [Rom. 3:23], and our sin separates us from an all-holy God

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross makes forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration available to all who receive Jesus as Lord.

True love forgives to make restoration and reconciliation possible.

Jesus came into our world to reveal God's love, and thus what love really is. God entered our world and became a man to redeem humanity to Himself. Redemption is taking action to save from error or evil. God's love has an ultimate redemptive purpose.

2. Christ-like love for others flows from God's love [7-8] Why should you love others?

⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.* ⁸ *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

Those who know God's love will love others [7-8]

Beloved, let us love one another [7]. They are *beloved* or loved by God. If you receive God's love it will change how you relate to God and others. Knowing how much God loves you is the key to a proper relationship with God and others. Love for others flows from experiencing God's love. Twice we are told that we are to *love one another* [7,11]. God is the source of love, *for love is of God* [7]. and is the standard of love, *for God is love* [8, 16]. It is wise to note that although God is love, love is not God.

Love is the test of truly knowing God [7-8], *everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.* ⁸ *He who does not love does not know God.* God's love displayed through us shows we've been born of God (new nature, born-again) and we know God experientially (i.e. know Him rather than know of Him). If you've experienced God's love it is only reasonable to respond with love for God and others [11].

3. Jesus' followers love others [11] Who should you love?

John culminates his thoughts by declaring, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* He reminds God's people they are *beloved* or loved by God, and presumably by John too. In light of Jesus' example of God's true love, Jesus' followers should prove their love for God by loving others in a similar way.

Jesus declared the same truth when He distilled all of God's commandments to their essence, The Great Commandments: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ And *the* second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" [Matt. 22:37-39]. Thus, these two commandments were so connected they could not be separated. As Jesus' disciple, John had discovered this profound truth that he shared with us: You cannot declare that you love God without loving others; and you cannot truly love others without knowing God's love and loving Him.

John repeats this call to love others [7,11, 3:10-18; Jn. 13:14, 34-35]. Why does John need to repeat the call to love others? Presumably, because we are not understanding this imperative command and living it.

We are called to experience and share redemptive love. So, whom are you called to love as Jesus' followers?

Love God supremely: God should be the preeminent object of your affection, adoration, and devotion. You are called to love God more than any other person, or anything of this world [Matt.22:37].

Family + friends: We need to appreciate that the most loving gift that we can provide to our family and friends is to help them to know and grow in Christ [Eph. 5:25, Jn. 15:13].

Neighbors: We are called to love people where we live, work, study, and worship as we love ourselves [Matt. 22:39]. Random acts of kindness are great, but we must appreciate that this is not the end goal. We engage and befriend people not simply because Christ has commanded us to, but because we have been called into God's redemptive work as His ambassadors. Engaging and befriending is the bridge that would allow us to prove our love for God and others that will provide opportunities for spiritual, conversations where you can share Jesus and His gospel.

The world: God so loved the world that He gave His only son that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life [Jn. 3:16]. Jesus did not come to save America, but Americans, and Cubans, and Koreans (of the North and South varieties). Similarly, we have the privilege of sharing resources to advance the gospel globally.

Enemies: Jesus uniquely calls His followers to love their enemies [Mt. 5:44]. We are to bless, do good, and pray for our enemies. When we recognize that we were God's enemies when He loved us, we begin to appreciate the unique place of showing redemptive love to enemies.

Jesus reveals a love that is so much more, so that we can become so much more. Jesus came to reveal God's love so that we could be redeemed and love God supremely and love other like we love ourselves so that they can be redeemed.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Consider some ways that the culture around you likely defines "love."

Q2. How does the concept of a redemptive purpose to love change perspective about loving others?

Q3. Review the list of different people that you are called to love (at the end of the teaching notes). Describe progress that you've made this year.

Q4. Contemplate this idea, "Jesus reveals a love that is so much more, so that we can become so much more." What thoughts come to mind, and how would you like to apply this lesson in this season?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful article about the true meaning of Christmas:

gotquestions.org/Christmas-true-meaning.html.

2. In the midst of all the business of the Christmas Holiday, take time to contemplate God's love. Perhaps write some thoughts and feelings that were stirred.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Look for opportunities around the Christmas Holiday to share the love of God with family, friends, and neighbors where you live, work, study, play and worship.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.