

1 John 4:7-11

“Know God’s Love”

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Intro. John is providing a list of traits so that you can *know* that you have eternal life [1 Jn. 5:13]. In this section, we discover that those who *know* God’s love *show* God’s love to others.

Subject: Love is of God

Object: Know and show God’s love

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. Love for others proves you know God [7-8,11]

We are *beloved* [7] or loved by God. More important than loving God or others is knowing how much God loves you. It would be wise, prudent, and appropriate for us to pause and reflect upon how much you are loved by God. When you receive, and appreciate God’s love it changes how you relate to God and others. We are called to *love one another* twice [7,11]. John reminds us that loving others is a reasonable response to God’s love when he says, *we ought to love one another* [11]. It is unfortunate that John needs to repeat this call to love others [1 Jn. 2:9-11, 3:10-18] but presumably we need to be reminded because despite the commandment from Christ Himself [Jn. 13:14, 34-35] we may not actually love one another.

God is the source and standard of love: *love is of God* [7], and those who are born of God (i.e. born again) have a new nature and experience with God and love others, especially the family of God (i.e. other believers) [7]. In essence, as God’s love is poured into us, it will pour out of us upon others. Those who don’t love others don’t know God [8]. Thus, our love for others is a test of our claim of knowing God.

God is love [8, 4:16], and He defines and demonstrates what love truly is. It is good to note that although God is love, love is not God. Love in the sense that our culture would

define the concept may involve erotic passion, brotherly affection, familial affections, deep bonds of friendship, and acts of kindness, mercy, and compassion. That cultural concept of love pales in comparison to God's love in Christ, and the gospel, and love as a cultural concept cannot replace God.

As Jesus' followers, who are we to love? First and foremost, we should love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength [Deut. 6:4-5, Matt. 22:37, Rev. 2:4]. You are called to love your family: spouse, children, parents (and siblings) [Eph. 5:25-6:4]. You are to love them with God's unconditional committed love even when their attitudes and actions are not pleasing to you or to God. You are to love neighbors where you live, work, study, play [Matt. 22:39]. These will often be people who are very different than you, who have a different worldview, different interests, and whom you may not have much in common with other than the fact that God has brought them into your sphere of influence [Lu. 10:25-37]. You are called to love neighbors where you worship (i.e. one another or other believers) [7]. Jesus' followers are even called to love enemies [Matt. 5:44].

Love for others is evidence of a life-giving relationship with God. Absent love for others, especially other believers, you may not have a saving faith in Christ.

2. Love for others is manifest by actions [9-11]

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.

Jesus' birth, words, works, and death proclaim what love is. *God's love has been manifested toward us* or revealed [9]. Here we see four traits of how God's love is manifest, and how we are to love:

Love gives sacrificially. *God has sent* or given Jesus [9, Jn. 3:16]. Jesus proclaimed, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep" [Jn.10:11]. Real love is motivated to give more than take; and to give without seeking to get something in return. God has given "*His only begotten Son*" [9]. Real love costs something. Like the apostle Paul, we can say, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" [2Cor. 9:15]. Those who have received God's love and indescribable gift are moved to sacrificially worship God (love Him), and love others. Your display of love to others is really a display of worship to God in gratitude for His gift(s) to you. King David observed that we cannot worship God with that which costs us nothing [2 Sam. 24:24]. And when Mary, the sister of Martha, anointed Jesus with costly perfumed oil, she was extravagant and held nothing

back [Jn. 12:1-8]. Your willingness to give sacrificially of your resources - your time, talents, and treasure reveals your love for God.

Love imparts life. Jesus came into the world *that we might live through Him* [9]. Jesus came to give us spiritual life with God (*zoe*) which is contrast with mere physical life (*bios*) that is also a gift from God. Jesus gave His life so that we could live, and so that we should no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again [2Cor. 5:15]. Jesus taught, healed, and was moved with compassion for people who were weary, harassed, and scattered like sheep without a shepherd [Matt. 9:35-36]. Jesus declared that every act of kindness that we bestow upon others, that is motivated by love for God and others, is just like we showed that love to Jesus Himself [Matt. 25:31-40]. We cannot impart spiritual life as Jesus does; but we are called to impart life in the sense that we care for needs and point people to Jesus and His gospel. The most loving act that we can do is to help people to come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Your compassionate and kind acts of love can be a bridge that help people to come to Christ.

Love initiates. *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us* [10]. Later in this chapter, we read, “We love [Him] because He first loved us” [4:19]. Your love for God and your love for others is responsive to His love for you. It is not a surprise that we should love God, but that He loves us is curious and reveals so much about God. God loves us even when we are opposed to Him and in rebellion against Him [Rom. 5:8-10]. Generally, the world loves those who love them first. On this earth, Jesus loved people who were outcasts, notorious sinners, even His enemies. People responded to His love and gospel, and lives and the world were transformed. People will respond more to your love than condemnation, argument, or reasoning.

If you want to be loved by others, you need to know God’s love, and show His love to others. “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” [Prov. 18:24].

Love offers forgiveness. Jesus was sent *to be the propitiation for our sins* [10]. Propitiation refers to a sacrifice that turns away God’s wrath. Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. The cross is the greatest expression of love. Remarkably, as Jesus was being crucified, His first statement from the cross was, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” [Lu. 23:34]. Sin separates us from God, but God offers forgiveness of your sin through faith in Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. The gospel, or good news, is that you can receive forgiveness and restoration through submitting your life to Jesus. The “bad news” is that there is no other way to be forgiven by God. So, unless you receive God’s forgiveness you will experience God’s wrath or judgement.

True love forgives and seeks to restore relationship. Those who have received Christ's forgiveness forgive others. We are called to, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God in Christ forgave you" [Eph. 4:32].

If you are in Christ, you have been forgiven of every sin. You won't experience God's judgment, but there may be consequences. And restoration of your relationship with God may take time. Similarly, when you forgive another person, because you are aware of God's forgiveness in your life, you no longer want to punish or avenge the wrong(s) done to you. However, restoring trust and relationship is another matter, and generally a process. Nevertheless, we are to love even enemies, and bless, pray and do good towards them [Matt. 5:44].

John concludes by reminding us for the second time in a few verses that we are *beloved* [10]. It is the realization that we are radically loved by God that stirs us to love others as we are loved in Christ, *if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another* [11].

Communion: reflect on God's love shown by Jesus voluntarily giving his life to pay for your sin ...

Study Guide Qs

Q1. *When you think about God's love for you, what thoughts come to mind, and how does it make you feel?*

Q2. *Describe a time that you were shown love that imparted life in the sense that it made you feel cared for, and pointed you to Jesus and His gospel?*

Q3. *How are you learning to initiate love for others? What experiences have you had recently where you initiated showing love to others?*

Q4. *Describe an experience where you sought to forgive. What were some of the difficulties, and how did knowing that God has forgiven you help you to forgive another?*

Digging Deeper

1. Search the phrase "one another" in the New Testament. What are some of the responsibilities that Jesus' followers have towards other believers?

2. As you contemplate the "one another" passages, how do they appear to relate to attitudes as opposed to actions? How might the apparent attitudes actually involve actions?