

GOOD SINCE

"SINCE GOD HAS LOVED US"

1 JOHN 4:7-21

This Week's Core Competency

Love – I unconditionally and sacrificially love and forgive others. 1 John 4:10-12, *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

Readers must make a critical initial decision regarding the subject of 1 John, i.e., what John is writing about in his letter, before they can make decisions regarding the meaning of its various parts. Is the apostle writing about *relationship* or *fellowship*? If the first, obedience to Christ's "new command" to "love one another" (Jn 13:34) is an evidence of salvation. Put negatively, anyone who does not love those who believe in Jesus is not saved. If the second, obedience is an evidence of intimacy with God. Put negatively, anyone who does not love those who believe in Jesus is not enjoying fellowship with God. Readers who decide the letter is about *relationship* to God read 4:7-8 this way: "Dear friends. Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and has a relationship to God (is saved). Whoever does not love does not have a relationship to God (is not saved), because God is love" (paraphrased). Readers who decide the letter

John's purpose in writing was to motivate his readers to cultivate greater intimacy with God.

– Thomas L. Constable

is about *fellowship* with God read 4:7-8 this way: "Dear friends. Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and has fellowship with him. Whoever does not love does not have fellowship with him, because God is love" (paraphrased).

The letter is about *fellowship* with God. One commentator writes:

"Both the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John deal with the subject of eternal life. John wrote his Gospel so that his readers might 'believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing they might have life through His name' (John 20:31). John wrote this epistle to Christians so that they could 'have fellowship' with the apostles, with God the Father, and with Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). He wrote it so that we might enter into the fullness of the eternal life that we possess (cf. John 10:10). However, the subject of this epistle is not eternal life, but fellowship with God. Fellowship with God is the essence of eternal life (cf. John 17:3).

"This epistle grew out of Jesus' Upper Room Discourse (John 14-17). Similarly, James' epistle grew out of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), Peter's first epistle grew out of Jesus' Discipleship Discourse (Matt. 10), and the Book of Revelation grew out of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25). In the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus explained what the apostles' relationship to God would be after He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell them (John 14:16-17). John expounded that revelation in this letter.

"There are several terms in this epistle that John used as synonyms: 'fellowship with God,' 'knowing God,' 'abiding in God,' and 'seeing God.' These terms all describe the experience of Christians. They all

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describe our relationship with God in varying degrees of intimacy. Our relationships with people vary. Some are more, some less, intimate. Fellowship with God is also a matter of greater or lesser intimacy. When we speak of being 'in fellowship' or 'out of fellowship,' we are oversimplifying our relationship to God. For example, a child's fellowship with his or her parents is rarely either perfect or nonexistent; it is usually somewhere between these extremes, and it may vary from day to day. John's purpose in writing was to motivate his readers to cultivate greater intimacy with God. The greater the intimacy, the greater our 'fellowship,' the better we 'know' God experientially, and the closer we 'abide' in Him (cf. John 14:21-24). The greater our intimacy with God, the more we will experience the life that is eternal. All Christians possess eternal life, but not all experience that life as God intended us to enjoy it (John 10:10). Similarly, all living human beings have life, but not all live an abundant life" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 John," 2017 ed., 4-5, www.soniclight.com).

In a nutshell, love in obedience to Jesus' command to "love one another" is a condition of *fellowship* with God not *relationship* to God.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

1 John 4:7-21

7 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.

13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be

the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Number the occurrences of "love" in all its forms.
- * Underline "know" in all its forms in vv. 7-16.
- * Box "for" in vv. 7, 20 and "because" in vv. 8, 13, 17, 18, 19 indicating *reason*.
- * Bracket "one and only" in v. 9.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 10, 12, 18.
- * Bracket "atoning sacrifice" in v. 10.
- * Box "so" indicating *comparison* in v. 11.
- * Circle "live/s in" in vv. 12, 13, 15, 16.
- * Highlight the command in v. 21.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Verses 7 and 8 are not quite parallel. Rewrite verse 8 to make it parallel to verse 7.
2. Put what "knows God" (v. 8) means in your own words.
3. Explain the *contrast* in verse 10.
4. Describe how believers "ought to love one another" (v. 11).
5. Do you think it's possible for a Christian to "hate" (v. 20) his Christian brothers and sisters? Explain.
6. Explain the *contrast* in verse 12.
7. Fellowship with the Father is *mutual*. Under what circumstances does God "live in" or "abide in" (NKJV) us and us in him?
8. Christians who love one another will have boldness on the day of judgment. How so?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about what makes verse 20 is true practically speaking.

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

John apparently enjoyed a particularly close relationship to Jesus. He was one of three selected to witness the Lord's transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36), and in the Fourth Gospel he refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (13:23). On top of that, the others must have recognized that he had an especially close relationship to the Lord, for when Peter wanted to know the name of the disciple whom Jesus had just said would betray him, he motioned to John, who was reclining next to the Lord at the time, and said, "Ask him which one he means" (13:24). It was John who went into the high priest's courtyard when Jesus was being interrogated following his arrest, while Peter waited at the door (18:15, 16), and it was to John that Jesus entrusted his mother's care before he died on the cross (19:26, 27). John wrote his first letter so that his readers might have the same close relationship that he had with Jesus. "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have *fellowship* with us. And our *fellowship* is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ" (1Jn 1:3, italics added).

We may not attain the level of intimacy that John enjoyed, but it is available to us. In 1 John 4:7-21, John tells us that God abides in whoever loves his brothers and sisters in Christ (v. 12) and confesses that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 15). What Jesus said and did in the upper room on the night he was betrayed left an indelible impression on John. And what did Jesus do? He gave us an example to follow when he washed the disciples' feet—an example of love that serves the ones loved. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,'" he said, "and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (Jn. 13:13-15). And what did Jesus say? He said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (vv. 34, 35). The heart and soul of John's theology is rooted in the revelation Jesus delivered to his friends when he "showed them the full extent of his love."

On 4:7-21, one commentator writes: "Following 4:1-6, in which the author provided criteria that his readers could use to 'test the spirits', he returns to the theme of loving one another expounded in 3:11-24 and develops it further in 4:7-21" (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC, 156). This section of the

letter contains a number of clear elements, the development and progression of which are, however, somewhat difficult to pin down. The same author identifies nine small units, which the NIV organizes into four paragraphs (for "dwell," and "dwelling/indwelling" read "abide," and "abiding"): "(i) 4:7a: the exhortation to love one another; (ii) 4:7b-8: the assertion that those who practice love know God, while those who do not practice love do not know God; (iii) 4:9-11: the demonstration of God's love in the sending of his Son as an atoning sacrifice, and the resulting obligation on the part of believers to love one another; (iv) 4:12-13: love for fellow believers is evidence that people dwell in (the unseen) God and God in them; (v) 4:14-15: belief in Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour is also evidence of this mutual indwelling; (vi) 4:16: believers know the love God has for them, and dwelling in love themselves is evidence that they dwell in God and God in them; (vii) 4:17-18: believers who are perfected in love have confidence and experience no fear as they face the day of judgement; (viii) 4:19-20: we love God because he loved us, but to say that we love God without loving one another means that we are liars; (ix) 4:21: a reiteration of the obligation that those who say they love God should love one another also" (156). Note the literary *inclusio*: "let us love one another" (v. 7) and "whoever loves God must also love his brother" (v. 21).

In a nutshell, since God so loved us, i.e., unconditionally (when we did not love him) and sacrificially (he sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice), we ought to *so* love one another. That's the point of 4:7-12. When we love one another, we manifest our pedigree and enjoy fellowship with God. In other words, we manifest we are "born from above" (Jn 1:13; 3:7) and are close to our heavenly Father. He abides in us, and his love is reproduced in us (v. 12); "it attains its full flower in us" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 John," 2017 ed., 69, www.soniclight.com). This doesn't mean every loving person is a Christian. "John is well aware that by itself love is not a mark of being God's child and knowing him. In 3:23 the command to love is directly linked to the demand for faith; and, indeed, in that context love is mentioned after the obligation to 'believe' in Jesus Christ" (Stephen S. Smalley, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 51, 1, 2, 3 *John*, 238). When we don't love one another, our intimacy with Abba is broken. Practically speaking, our fellowship is always fellowship to a *greater or lesser* degree, just like our

fellowship with family and friends that is neither perfect nor non-existent but varies from day to day. And according to verses 13-16a, when we confess that "Jesus is the Son of God," we manifest the two-sided nature of abiding—us in God and God in us. Since confession isn't the only condition for abiding, obedience to Jesus' command being the other, "one not abiding may or may not make this confession" (Constable, 71).

What's more, according to verses 16b-18, love made complete in mutual abiding, dispels fear of future judgment because we know that when we appear before the Lord, he will be pleased with us

because we were like him in this world. The fear of punishment to which John refers pertains to the loss of rewards rather than the condemnation of sin (see 1Co 3:10-15). To 16b-18 John adds in verses 19-21, if we say we love God and ignore the needs of others, we are simply fooling ourselves. John has already said, "Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (3:17, 18). The he concludes by reiterating, "Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

The Message of the Passage

Let us love one another, for if we do, we will enjoy fellowship with God and his love will be made complete in us, so that we may have boldness when we stand before him.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 7 **everyone who loves** John is talking about Christians who love one another as indicated in v. 7a. Two things can be inferred from their obedience to Jesus' command (see Jn 13:34): (1) they are born of God, and (2) know God. "We know from 3:18 (see also 4:9) that John is concerned with love in action, rather than with 'love' in the abstract. It is likely, therefore, that when he speaks about everyone who is 'loving' [*agapon*], he means not only an attitude of love (or being loving) but also the practice of love" (Smalley, 237).
- v. 7 **knows** "Born of God" and "knows God" are different yet related things. The first pertains to enjoying relationship to God, the second to enjoying fellowship with him. "It should be carefully noted that John here treats these concepts as two different things. This is especially observable when he goes on to say (in verse 8) that 'he who does not love does not know God.' It would have been both natural and easy to say, 'He who does not love, is not born of God and does not know God' in direct antithesis to the statement of this verse. But this is precisely what cannot be said. Already John has talked about a person who 'hates his brother,' which is a feat quite impossible for a non-Christian since a Christian is not his brother (cf. 2:11; 3:10b; 3:15; 4:20)" (Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 183). "Knows God" in verses 7-8 might be paraphrased "has fellowship with God."
- v. 8 **God is love** "When the author says that 'God is love', he is not making an ontological statement describing what God is in his essence; rather, he is, as the following verses (4:9-10) reveal, speaking about the loving nature of God revealed in saving action on behalf of humankind" (Kruse, 157).
- v. 9 **one and only** The root idea of the Greek term (*monogenes*) is simply "one of a kind" or "unique" (see Kruse, "A Note on Monogenes," 158-59). The translation in the NKJV is not intended to suggest that the Son, the Second Person in the Godhead, was actually "begotten" at some point in eternity past and hence is not eternal.
- v. 10 **atonement sacrifice** Cf., "propitiation" (NKJV). The Greek word (*hilasmos*) occurs only here and in 1 John 4:10. Based on its use and the use of cognate terms in the OT it refers to "the cleansing and forgiveness of the sinner, and the turning away of God's anger . . . neither the idea of expiation nor that of propitiation can be ruled out as possible meanings for *hilasmos* in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10" (Kruse, 76).
- v. 12 **seen** See also Jn. 1:18 (cf. Ex 33:19). "In His divine nature and essence, God has never been seen by any living man" (Zane C. Hodges, "1 John," in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 899).
- v. 12 **lives in** Cf., "abides in" (NKJV); or "remains in" (see Jn 15:1-17). Throughout his letter John uses this word to imply the fellowship we can have with the Father through obedience. Here this fellowship is mutual (3:24; cf. Jn 15:4-7). According to one author it means "actively living" (189).
- v. 12 **made complete** The Greek verb (*teleioo*) means "to complete," "to finish," "to bring to its goal," "to bring to full measure." "God's love achieves its goal and reaches its full measure in us when that love is reproduced in us and reflected through us by loving one another" (Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 189).
- v. 13 **of His Spirit** Not "the Spirit he gave us" (see 3:24) but "given us *of His Spirit*." Love for one another, which God gives to us, is like his own love for us. "In the context, this can only mean that we participate in a 'spirit of love' which is nothing less than His Spirit, since 'God is love'! In 4:13 we might almost be tempted to write *S/spirit* to suggest both meanings" (190).
- v. 15 **acknowledges** Cf., "confesses" (NKJV). "When Jesus is confessed as the Son of God, He is being confessed as 'Christ come in flesh' (cf. 1 John 4:2) and as the Guarantor of eternal life and future resurrection to every believer" (cf. Jn 11:25-27). "Therefore, 'Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God' (1 John 5:1)" (195).
- v. 17 **day of judgment** A reference to the judgment seat of Christ before which Christians will stand when their Lord returns (1Co 3:12-15; 2Co 5:10). "What the author means by having 'confidence (*parresian*) on the day of judgement' can be deduced from a parallel passage found in 2:28 . . . Here confidence is equated with being unashamed before Christ at his coming, and in the context of 2:28 that confidence arises out [of] believers' obedience to God's word" (Kruse, 167).
- v. 17 **like him** "An unloving Christian is *unlike* his Lord and may anticipate rebuke as loss of reward at the judgment seat. But a loving believer is one in whom the work of God's love has been made complete, and the fruit of that is boldness before the One who will judge him" (Hodges, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 900).
- v. 18 **torment** Christians in whom God's love is not been perfected in loving one another will look forward to future judgment with trepidation, tormented by their fear of the outcome.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Fairy tales have attempted to teach us many things about love. Love can transform a cold-hearted hideous beast into a charming prince. True love's kiss can break an evil enchantress' spell and wake a sleeping princess. A neglected stepdaughter can be visited by a fairy godmother and dances her way into her happily ever after. Love is certainly a splendid thing. While these stories are heartwarming, they do not get to the heart of the matter. All love begins with God. God is love and all love comes from God. We love because He first loved us. What does God's love look like when we live it out? True love forgives. Colossians 3:13 reminds us that we are to bear with each other and forgive when we have been offended. True love accepts. In Romans 15:7 we are called to accept each other as Christ has accepted us. Love is patient and kind even when others don't meet our expectations. True love honors one another. It causes us to treat others as valuable. In Romans 12:10 we are instructed to honor others above ourselves. Our greatest example of true love hung on a cross and died in our place. How can you and I show true love to our family, friends and neighbors? We must first be filled with God's love. What steps can your family take this week to strengthen your love relationship with the Father?

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read 1 John 4:7-21

1. Where does love come from?
2. How did God show us His love?
3. What does verse 11 encourage us to do?

What Do You Think

1. What do you think about when you hear the word "love"?
2. How would your friends at school define "love"?
3. After reading this passage, what would you tell them?

What R U Going To Do

Read verses 19-21 again. Sometimes we know people who are just hard to love. Maybe they are unkind to us or make bad choices. Make a decision this week to pray for those people every day and then look for opportunities to share God's love!

Core Comp

Personal God - I believe God cares about everything in my life.

Memory Verse

John 1:5 - *The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

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Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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