

Knowing God Through Love

1 John 4:7-11

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1 John 4:1-6 Summary: Describes the distinction between the spirit of Truth and the spirit of error.

Applications from this passage...

The spirits with a biblical view of Jesus are of God, those that do not are not of God.

1 John 4:7-8 – The call to love.

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

Why should love be a visible characteristic of Christians?

We are not commanded to **love one another** to earn or become worthy of God's love. We **love one another** because we are loved by God, and having received that love, live in light of it.

Why is love so important?

Let us love one another, for love is of God: John's emphasis on love among the people of God is powerful. If **love is of God**, then those who claim to be **born of God**, and claim to **know God**, must be able to **love one another** in the body of Christ.

What gives Christians the capacity to love as God?

When Christians are **born of God**; a love is imparted to their life that they did not have before.

- Christians are not “*just* forgiven” — they are born anew by God's Spirit.

What does it mean that the one born of God *knows* God?

There are several Greek words that could be translated “know” into English. This specific word for **knows** (*ginosko*) is the word for a knowledge by *experience*.

- John is saying when we really experience God, it will show by our love for **one another**.

How does loving God help us love others?

In order to love with God's kind of love, we need to draw closer to God.

- Every human relationship is like a triangle. The two people in the relationship are at the base of the triangle,

and God is at the top. As the two people draw closer to the top of the triangle, closer to God, they will also draw closer to one another.

- Weak relationships are made strong when both people draw close to the Lord!

How is it that those who are not born again can still display the love of God?

Since people are created in the image of God, all people have the capacity to love.

- However, human love, however noble, falls short if it does not include God as the supreme object of its affection.

What does it tell us that *God is love*?

This is a glorious truth. Love describes the character and heart of God. He is so rich in love and compassion, that it can be used to describe His very being.

What is often missed when declaring that *God is love*? **God is love**, but this is not saying *everything* about God.

Love is an essential aspect of His character, and colors every aspect of His nature. But it does not eliminate His holiness, His righteousness, or His perfect justice.

- Instead, we know the holiness of God is loving, and the righteousness of God is loving, and the justice of God is loving.
- Everything God does, in one way or another, expresses His love.

Another problem: most people will not be thinking of Godly love... Instead, they are thinking of a squishy, namby-pamby, have-a-nice-day kind of love that values being “nice” more than wanting what is really best for the other person.

What else besides love does the Bible reveal about God?

That God is *spirit* (John 4:24), God is *light* (1 John 1:5), and that God is *a consuming fire* (Hebrews 12:29).

Since God is love, does this mean He cannot hate?

God cannot be other than loving in His core being. Biblical statements about God “hating” are either functional, contextual, or idiomatic ways of speaking (choice, non-selection, or strong opposition to sin), not contradictions of His essential nature as love.

Doesn't God hate those who have rejected His provision for eternal life?

Scripture teaches both that God is love and that God's wrath rests on those who reject Christ's provision.

John 3:36 – *He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*

God's wrath toward those who reject His provision is not a denial of His nature as love.

- It is the holy response of a righteous God to sin and final rejection of the only provided Savior.
- The only way to be removed from that wrath is to receive Christ by faith; faith in Christ is fully saving and results in eternal security.

Why is important for people to know that *God is love*?

Few people really believe that *God is love*. They won't receive His love and let it transform their lives.

- It transforms our life to know the love of God.

1 John 4:9-11 – Love's application

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. 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

How was the love of God was manifested toward us?

God sent His only begotten Son: Love is not only defined by the sacrifice of Jesus; it is also defined by the giving of the Father.

- It was a sacrifice for the Father to send the Second Person of the Trinity, and a sacrifice to pour out the judgment we deserved upon God the Son.

What does it mean that Jesus is the Father-God's *only begotten Son*?

The Sonship of Jesus is unique (**only**) and **begotten** indicates that Jesus and the Father are of the same substance, the same essential Being.

- The term "begotten" does not imply Jesus was made or created. "Begotten" in this context points to unique relationship and identity within the Godhead, not to origination in time.
- Jesus' humanity was created (essentially added) but that does not take from His essence as God.

How else besides sending the Son did the Father reveal His love toward us?

That we might live through Him: The love of the Father was also in what His sending the Son accomplished for us. It brings life to all who trust in Jesus and His work on their behalf, because He is *the propitiation for our sins*.

What does propitiation mean?

Propitiation has the idea of a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God.

- God rightly regarded us, apart from Him, as worthy targets of His judgment. We were rebels and enemies of Him, even if we didn't know it.
- But on the cross, Jesus took the punishment our sin deserved — His sacrifice turned away the judgment we would have received.

What does it mean *that we might live through Him*?

This is a great way to define the Christian life, to *live through Him*. Not only do we have eternal life, we can grow in our relationship with Him in the here and now which enables us to live life *more abundantly* (John 10:10).

Why did Father-God send the Son into the world?

He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins: This shows the love of the Father. It might have shown enough love that the Father sent the Son, and not some lower-grade angel; but He sent the Son, not on a fact-finding mission or merely a mission of compassion — He sent the Son to *die* for our sins.

- If God had merely sent Jesus to teach us about Himself, that would have been wonderful enough.
- If God had sent Jesus simply to be our example, that would have been good too ...

But the wonderful thing is that God did not stop with these but sent His Son to die the death for us to pay the penalty for our sin.

What is so amazing about God's love for sinners?

We can think of someone paying a great price to save someone deserving, someone good, someone noble, someone who had done much for them.

- But God did all this for rebels, for sinners, for those who had turned their backs on Him.

What does it mean, *in this is love*?

Real love, *agape* love, is not defined by our love for God, but by His love for us.

- His love for us initiates our relationship of love with Him, our love only responds to His love for us.
- We can't love God the way we should unless we are receiving and living in His love.

Our love for God doesn't really say anything great about us. It is only the common sense response to knowing and receiving the love of God.

How should we respond to God's love for us?

Having received this love from God, we are directed to *love one another*. This pattern of receiving from God, then giving to others was familiar to John (John 13:14).

How did Jesus show what our response should be to the love of God when He washed the disciples' feet?

We might have expected Him to conclude by gesturing to His own feet and asking who among them was going to do to Him what He had just done for them. Instead:

John 13:14 – *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet*

The proper way to love God in response to His love for us is to go out and *love one another*.

How may we demonstrate the love of God?

Through practical action... Has anybody offended you? Seek reconciliation.

- Oh, but I am the offended party.
So was God, and He sought reconciliation.
- Oh, but the other party is so unworthy.
So are you; but God loved you and sent his Son.

If we do not *love one another*, how can we say that we have received the love of God?

Love is the proof we are to look for.

- If you had a pipe that water kept going into it, but never came out, that pipe would be useless. You would replace it.
- God puts His love into our lives that it might flow out.

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- Those who love God will love the children of God.
- The love of God is seen in everything He does.
- The love of God is demonstrated in sending the Son.