

WE CANNOT CLAIM TO LOVE GOD IF WE DO NOT LOVE ONE ANOTHER

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

1. What are some practical ways we can hate our brothers and sisters?
2. Why is this inconsistent with the love we have received from God?
3. What are some practical ways we can love our brothers and sisters?
4. What is the single best thing we can do to grow in our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ?

KNOWING THAT WE KNOW HIM

LOVE MADE COMPLETE || JOHN 4:7-21

We've entitled our series in 1 John, "Knowing that We Know Him." John wants his readers to be confident in their relationship with Christ. In a world full of imposters and pretenders John offers three simple tests of authentic faith. The first test is the theology test. We know that we know him when we understand who Jesus is and what he has done for us. The second test is the obedience test. We know that we know him when we obey his commands, when our lives are increasingly shaped by his teaching and character. The third test builds on the second test, but it has a specific act of obedience in mind. We might call it the love test. We know that our lives are shaped by his teaching and character when we love one another the way that Christ loved us.

If you were to ask John, which of the three is most vital, he would fly right by sound theology and a principled lifestyle to zero in on our ability to love one another.

As critical as sound theology is, our theology is bankrupt unless it leads to obedience. As essential as obedience is, our obedience is bankrupt if we stop short of loving each other the way that Christ loved us.

While John has been shaping his argument throughout the letter, he brings it to a brilliant conclusion in chapter 4. He crafts a working definition of love that is grounded in the character of God and the cross of Christ. He leads us step by step through six fundamental truths that radically challenge the way we think about love.

GOD IS LOVE

⁸ *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

^{16b} *God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*

Theologians often speak of God's attributes. His non-communicable attributes are qualities that belong to God and God alone (he is all-knowing, all-powerful, and equally present in all places at all times). His communicable attributes are qualities we were created to share with God (love, righteousness, justice, mercy, grace, and compassion).

1. How has the fall impacted our ability to reflect God's character as a whole?
2. How has the fall impacted our ability to love God and love each other?
3. How has the fall impacted our understanding and practice of love?

GOD'S LOVE IS MOST CLEARLY SEEN ON THE CROSS

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.*

1. What does the cross teach us about the extent of God's love for us?
2. How does the cross satisfy the justice of God?

OUR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER SHOULD BE SHAPED BY THE CROSS

¹¹ *Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

1. How did Jesus lay down his life for us?
2. How do we lay down our lives for each other?
3. What was the ultimate goal of God's love for us?
4. What is our ultimate goal of loving each other?

WHEN WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER THE WAY CHRIST LOVED US WE CAN BE SURE WE LIVE IN GOD AND HE LIVES IN US

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.*

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.*

^{16b} *God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*

1. According to John, where does love come from?
2. How would you describe the difference between the love that comes from God and the love that we often see in people who do not know God?
3. When we love one another (the way Christ loved us) what does that indicate about us?
4. What do you think it means for God's love to be made complete in us?
5. What do you think it means for God to live in us and us in him?

WHEN WE LIVE IN GOD AND HE LIVES IN US WE LIVE WITH FREEDOM AND CONFIDENCE

¹⁷ *This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world, we are like Jesus.* 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.*

1. Why should we have confidence on the day of judgment?
2. How does confidence on the day of judgment lead to living with freedom and confidence now?