

Love (I John 4:7-21)

We are saving I John 4:1-6 for our discussion of truth in the next section of this outline. Suffice it to say, the matter of loving the truth and loving the brethren are very closely related (I John 5:2; II John 1:1-11; III John 1:1-4; Ephesians 4:11-16,25; Philippians 1:3-11.

I John 4:7-8,16 – To know God is to dwell in an environment of love.

The statement, “God is love” is profound and could take volumes to explain. When we consider other profound words that describe God (i.e. holy, sovereign, omnipotent, omnipresent, etc.), we tend to get one picture of God that is quite different than when we talk about His goodness, mercy, longsuffering, kindness and love. The examples of stern deities of the world’s religions and the earthly monarchs and sovereigns throughout history mar our understanding of that first list of descriptions of God. The passions and affections of man mar that second list of descriptions. Humanly, we can’t imagine God or reconcile the two lists (I Corinthians 1:19-21; 2:14). How can a holy, all-powerful God, who condemns sin, also be loving and full of compassion? Truly, God is unimaginable and unmanageable! We need God to reveal (manifest / show) Himself to us (I John 1:2; 3:16; 4:9).

For now, let’s think of a few ways that God shows us that He is love.

- That God created us in His image, for fellowship and intimacy with us, is an evidence of love.
- That the whole creation is powerfully and benevolently designed to meet all our needs is evidence of love.
- That God did not wipe-out mankind and His creation, when sin entered the world, is evidence of love.
- That God would sacrifice Himself to redeem us back from sin and secure an eternal future with us is evidence of love.
- That God would endure millennia of the rebellion and sin of man to safely gather all His elect is evidence of love.
- That God’s Spirit would reside with us, so that we are never lost or forsaken, is evidence of love.
- That God would forever separate all evil (Satan, demons, unbelievers) from us to give us a perfect eternal home with Him is evidence of love.

Now, let’s see how we can perceive, receive, share, and dwell in the love of God.

I John 4:9-10 – Love is manifested by the gracious work of Christ.

Through faith in Christ, we are given a spiritual, second birth that allows the life of God to be in us. The debt of our sins is satisfied by the price He paid on the cross.

I John 4:11-15 – This new life from God is a life of love.

There are basically three aspects of this love:

- **Love to God** (Worship and Service)
- **Love to the family of God** (Edification and Fellowship)
- **Love to our fellowman** (Evangelism and Example = Testimony)

This life of love:

- Is received and lived by faith in the Son of God and His gospel.
- Is divine and spiritual – We do not manufacture or imitate love. We receive and distribute God's love by His Spirit.
- Causes us to testify and confess Christ to the world.

I John 4:16-19 – The effect of the environment of God's love: God's love gives us...

- The ability to recognize and receive His love
- The desire to inhabit His love and to conform to His love
- Growth – the process of seeking and experiencing perfect love
- Boldness, courage and confidence (God's love has a purifying / strengthening effect.)
- Sanctification – becoming more like Christ (note I John 4:17, "...As He **is**..." – not "... as He **was**..." We are interacting with the living Christ – not just a memory of Christ.)
- Victory over fear (The absence of hatred helps deliver us from fear.)
- Humility – It is God who first sought us. We can't make God love us. We can't stop God from loving us.

I John 4:20-21 – Honesty, Faith, and Obedience.

Some obey out of fear and duty. Some can believe doctrinal truths academically, and with intellectual pride. But our relationship with God is never more evident than when the truth about Jesus Christ transforms us into loving, sacrificial servants.

More about the environment of God's love

See Matthew 5:43-48; John 3:16-21; 17:14-26; Romans 5:1-11; 8:28-39; I Corinthians 13:1-8a; II Corinthians 5:14-17; 13:14; Galatians 5:13-26; Ephesians 2:1-10; 3:14-19; 4:1-3,11-16; 5:1-2; 6:23-24; Philippians 2:1-4; I Thessalonians 4:1-10; II Timothy 1:7; Titus 3:1-7; Hebrews 10:23-25; James 3:8-18; I Peter 1:22-23 cp. Psalm 107:1-43; 145:8-21.

To share the gospel with men is to share the love of God with men (I Thessalonians 2:1-12; II Timothy 2:22-26).