

# If You Love Me...Love One Another

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## If You Love Me...

- Keep My Commands
- Love One Another
- Walk in the Light

## Who is John

- Disciple / Apostle
- Writes to the Church as a loving Father, with tenderness and authority
- Combats Gnosticism

## What is Gnosticism

- False teaching based on the merit of Secret or Higher Knowledge leading to Salvation
- Taught that all matter was evil, and our actions do not need to match our knowledge

## John refutes Gnostics by saying

- what you do does matter, Christians are those who are increasing in righteousness.
- how you treat others matters, Christians are known by their love for one another
- your whole being matters, Christians are those who proclaim "Jesus is Lord" with every fibre of their being.

## If You Love Me ... Love One Another

There is a real trend these days to point out all of the problems that exist in Church, and then to stay away because of those problems.

Imagine that you are a doctor at a hospital.

You go into the first patients room and say “This one has a fever, I’m out of here.”

You go into the next room and notice a show on the TV that you don’t like, “This one has poor taste in TV shows, how dare they come here. I’m leaving”

You go into a third room and there is a person who smiles at you and says “Hi”. That person is always happy, don’t they know that they have problems, they’re sick, I’m leaving.”

What kind of a doctor would you be, if all you saw was peoples problems and never helped. What would your reputation be?

What kind of Christian would you be, if you look at the other Christians only to point out flaws.

Jesus says to his disciples

### **John 15:12 HCSB**

This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you.

By the way, the love that we are speaking of today should not be thought of in a romantic sense. We are not commanded to all fall in love with one another.

Instead, the love that we are commanded to demonstrate is a social and moral kind of love, from the greek word **agapaō**, Pronounced *ag-ap-ah'-o*.

We are to act with social and moral love towards one another, as Christ as done for us.

### **1 John 3:14–15 HCSB**

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

Today we look at the role of godly love amongst Christians.

Should Christians also show godly love to those who are not in Christ? Yes, of course. Like the character of the good samaritan, we must show God’s extreme love and compassion to any “neighbour” that God brings into our lives.

But in 1 John, we are being taught about God’s love for one another.

### **1 John 4:7–8 (HCSB)**

<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

## God is Love

This is fantastic news! God is Love. God's heart doesn't want to see his people lost, and hopeless. God is Love, and so God takes action to show us his love.

Because God is love, there is nothing that he does that is unloving. He is a good God, and that is good news.

Some people have it in mind that God has it out for them, and it causes them to tremble.

The truth is that God's goodness and love is far greater than we have the ability to comprehend. Part of being a Christian is God teaching us more and more about how great His love is. A huge part of our understanding of God's love happens as His love flows through us to others.

## God's children love one another as a result of our relationship with God.

To know God is to become godly, he transforms us. If God is love, then those of us who are called his children must also have a reputation for being loving.

People should have a certain picture come to their mind when they hear the word, Christian.

For example:

- What comes to mind with the word doctor? Someone who wants to help others be made well.
- When you think of a police officer, you think of someone who helps to keep order in society.
- When you think of a teacher, you think of a person who is giving themselves to helping others to learn
- When you think of a Christian, you think of someone who loves as God loves.

## If we don't love one another, it shows that we don't love God.

Remember that John writes, "The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

These are strong words, and I read them as a warning. I cannot harbour any sort of grudge or vengeance against anyone. We must love as God loves.

God is love. We are God's children, and should represent God. How can someone not love and be called a child of God?

Lets talk about how this love should look and be seen in our lives.

## **1 John 3:18 HCSB**

Little children, we must not love with word or speech, but with truth and action.

Words are valuable, and of course you should express your love to others in words. But if the extent of your love is words, than you will fall very short of knowing and experiencing God's divine love. If your love does not consist of both truth and action, then God's love will not be matured in your life.

When Jesus came to earth, he was fully God and fully man. This means that Jesus, was a perfect demonstration and example of God's love. He is our example of how to love. Jesus is the example that John uses to show what God's revealed love looks like.

### **1 John 4:9–10 HCSB**

God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

### **God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins**

Propitiation is not a word that we often use. It means "appeasement" or "satisfaction". God's love is more than equal to God's wrath. God's wrath against those who sin is worse than we care to think about. God's love is better than we could dream about. For God sent His Son to earth to satisfy his wrath against us, the ones who are sinners.

Jesus' sacrificial death in our place has infinite value. The reason that Jesus' death has this everlasting value is that he is fully God and fully man. It is different than if you or I sacrificed our life for someone else. It is God on a cross. This is love. This is more than I could ask for, and probably something that I would never ask for. But even before we were aware of our need, Jesus, fully God and fully man, goes to the cross and dies for me.

He left His Father's throne above, So free, so infinite His grace;

Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race;'

Tis mercy all, immense and free; For, O my God, it found out me.

Amazing love, How can it be, that thou my God would die for me. (Charles Wesley)

### **1 John 4:11 HCSB**

Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another.

This is incredibly challenging to me. I have much to learn. Because if I understand the Apostle John correctly, he is saying that I need to love those in the Church with the same love that I confess to have for God. My instincts need to undergo some transformation here. Because I say that God is worthy of my love. I say that God can be trusted with my love. But what about when I don't feel like loving?

Its easy to love a God that we cannot see, because we feel gratitude, and we know what He's done and so we love him. But how do you express that love? What does the love of God look like in your life?

Jesus says,

**John 13:34–35 HCSB**

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Let me give you some examples from early Church history for what the Church has been known for in the past.

The first and second century church lived in a different culture than us.

- Pity was pitiful
- Mercy was weakness
- And the Church was known for both pity and mercy. They took care of their poor, they showed kindness to those who could not afford it.
- God's divine love matured in these congregations as they lived with different values than their surrounding countrymen.

In 165 AD a devastating epidemic swept through the Roman Empire (possibly smallpox).

- It was a 15 year epidemic, and a quarter to a third of the general population died because of it.
- Emperor Marcus Aurelius wrote of caravans of carts and wagons hauling away the dead.
- Most people had no idea how to be helpful. The concern was how to stay healthy, and the best way to do that was to avoid the sick at all costs.
- When a symptom occurred, the first response was to throw the sick person out of home and into the street.

How did the early church respond, how did their love look?

- They believed that life does not end at the grave. And so they willingly put themselves in contact with the sick without fear of dying themselves. When everyone else ran from and abandoned the sick, Christians with a godly love came to their aid.
- An enormous amount of people were brought back to health because of the courageous love of the Church.

Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria reports this account in a pastoral letter to his members.

Most of our brothers showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbours and cheerfully accepting their pains. Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead... The best of our brothers lost their lives in this manner, a number of presbyters, deacons and laymen winning high commendation so that in death in this form, the result of great piety and strong faith, seems in very way the equal to martyrdom.<sup>1</sup>

This is God's love being matured, or perfected in his Church. Its a love that goes beyond feeling and instincts. Its an obedience love, based on relationship with God.

Can you love in the face of death. Jesus is our example. He loved us to the point of death.

Can you love at great cost to yourself and your family? Jesus is our example, he left his home in heaven to show us love.

### **1 John 4:12 HCSB**

No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us.

Last week we talked about how the word "perfected" can also be translated as "matured". We spoke of God's love maturing in us as we demonstrate our obedience.

John is making the same point about God's love being perfected in us, except in this case he is talking about God's love being matured in us as we love one another.

John is not saying you have to love perfectly. Instead he is saying that God's love becomes more and more perfected in you as you love others.

How does this work.

Lets compare the Christian life to one of doctor in a hospital.

The doctor begins his journey with a desire to want to help people.

- He goes to school,
- He proves a knowledge of medicine
- He is accepted into a residency program to work with qualified and experienced doctors

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<sup>1</sup>Stark, Rodney, The Triumph of Christianity, 2011, HarperCollins, Pg 115

- He graduates from that program and is ready to start a career.

How does the ability to administer medicine and help people come to wellness mature in that process?

- its more than just passing the tests, although the knowledge is foundational.
- Its more than just learning from others, although having a good teacher is so important.
- Its more than practicing medicine on patients, although experience can't be bought.
- It's all of these things, combined over time with regular application and devotion.

GOd's love being perfected or matured in your life is similar.

- A knowledge of God's word is foundational. Read your Bible.
- A supporting Christian community is essential. Share your life with other Christians, and allow others to have influence in your life. Allow others to challenge you, and ask hard questions.
- Practice your love on others. Show kindness, do nice things. Being a child of God affects every single part of who you are. Your mind, your heart and your soul are all needed to show love.
- With devotion, and time, and of course, with the help of God the Holy Spirit, we find His love maturing in our lives.

Here is the amazing result, we get to know God's love better than we ever could if we just relied on our feelings and emotions. That love will be a proof to us from God, that we are His children.

### **1 John 4:13–16 HCSB**

This is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given assurance to us from His Spirit. And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent His Son as the world's Savior. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God remains in him and he in God. And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.

We can come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. Its tangible. You can feel it when your Christian family shows you love.

Here are some ideas for how you can show love this week.

1. Listen with love.
2. Help with a task.

3. Pray for each other.
4. Pray with each other.
5. Proclaim the truth in love to one another.
6. Stay in contact.
7. Do thoughtful things.
8. Greet one another with kindness.
9. Write an encouraging letter.
10. Host a meal.
11. Have theological conversations to sharpen one another.

God loves his children so much. In 1 John we see that God proves his love to us in these ways

1. He is making us holy. We see His work in our lives as He empowers us to keep his commands.
2. He is maturing His love in us. By God's powerful grace at work in us, we show and know God's love to one another.
3. He is transforming our minds. We can say with everything that we are, Jesus Christ is Lord of All, King over all Kings and the one and only Saviour of the World.

Make no mistake about it Christian, God Loves you.

But if you are not yet a Christian, this love that God has is for you as well. Jesus teaches us in

**John 3:16–17 HCSB**

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Believe in Jesus, ask him to forgive you for your sins, and trust him for salvation.

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