

1 John 4:12 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[INDEX FOR ALL VERSES ON 1 JOHN](#)

[1 John 4:1](#)
[1 John 4:2](#)
[1 John 4:3](#)
[1 John 4:4](#)
[1 John 4:5](#)
[1 John 4:6](#)
[1 John 4:7](#)
[1 John 4:8](#)
[1 John 4:9](#)
[1 John 4:10](#)
[1 John 4:11](#)
[1 John 4:12](#)
[1 John 4:13](#)
[1 John 4:14](#)
[1 John 4:15](#)
[1 John 4:16](#)
[1 John 4:17](#)
[1 John 4:18](#)
[1 John 4:19](#)
[1 John 4:20](#)
[1 John 4:21](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 4

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12^{[+](#)}

"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading. (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

"Asking questions is the key to understanding."

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...

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1 John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us:

Greek - theon oudeis popote teteatai (3SRM/PI) ean agapomen (1PPAI) allelous o theos en hemin menei (3SPAI) kai e agape autou en hemin teteleiomene (RPP) estin (3SPAI) .

KJV 1 John 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

BGT 1 John 4:12 θες ο δες π ποτε τεθ αιται. ν γαπ μεν λλ λους, θες ν μ ν μ νει κα γ πη αι το ν μ ν τετελειωμ νη στ ν.

NET 1 John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God resides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

CSB 1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is

perfected in us.

ESV 1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

NIV 1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

NLT 1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

NRS 1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

NJB 1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God, but as long as we love one another God remains in us and his love comes to its perfection in us.

NAB 1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

YLT 1 John 4:12 God no one hath ever seen; if we may love one another, God in us doth remain, and His love is having been perfected in us;

MIT 1 John 4:12 No one has ever eyeballed God. If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is perfected in us.

GWN 1 John 4:12 No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

BBE 1 John 4:12 No man has ever seen God: if we have love for one another, God is in us and his love is made complete in us:

RSV 1 John 4:12 No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

NKJ 1 John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

ASV 1 John 4:12 No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us:

Amplified - No man has at any time [yet] seen God. But if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us!

NLT - No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

Smalley - No one has ever seen God; but, if we love one another, God dwells in us and his love has been brought to completion in us. (Word Biblical Commentary)

Wuest - God in His essence no one has ever yet beheld, with the result that no one has the capacity to behold (Him). If we habitually are loving one another, God in us is abiding, and His love has been brought to its fulness in us, and exists in that state of fulness. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

- **seen:** 1Jn 4:20 Ge 32:30 Ex 33:20 Nu 12:8 John 1:18 1Ti 1:17 6:16 Heb 11:27
- **love one another** - 1Jn 4:6 3:24
- **His love** - 1Jn 4:17,18 2:5 1Co 13:13
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages -

John 1:18+ "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

Exodus 33:20-23+ But He said, "**You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!**" 21 Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have

passed by. 23 "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

John 5:37+ "And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. **You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.**

John 6:46+ "**Not that anyone has seen the Father**, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

1 Timothy 6:16+ Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, **Whom no man has seen or can see.** To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

2 Peter 3:11+ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people **ought** ([dei](#) - present tense - habitually) you to be in **holy conduct** (E.G. LOVING ONE ANOTHER) and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) to be found by Him in peace, spotless (Jas 1:27+) and blameless,

1 John 2:5+ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly **been perfected** ([teleioo](#) - perfect tense divine passive) . By this we know that we are in Him:

1 John 4:17+ By this, love is **perfected** ([teleioo](#) - perfect tense divine passive) with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

John 17:23+ I in them and You in Me, that they **may be perfected** ([teleioo](#) - perfect tense divine passive) in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

1 John 3:17+ But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

HOW TO SEE THE INVISIBLE GOD: LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER

*The life of a Christian who abides in God's love is a potent witness
for God in the world. Men cannot see God, but they can see
His love moving us to deeds of helpfulness and kindness.
-- Warren Wiersbe*

No one ([oudeis](#)) **has seen** ([theaomai](#) - gazed intently at) **God at any time**; if (3rd class condition - potential action) **we love** ([agapao](#) - present tense - habitually) **one another** ([allelon](#)), **God abides** ([meno](#) - present tense - continually dwells) **in us, and His love is** ([agape](#)) **perfected** ([teleioo](#) - perfect tense divine passive) **in us** - Literally it reads "God (first in Gk for emphasis) *no one ever yet has seen.*" **No one** ([oudeis](#)) means absolutely no one has "gazed intently" at God (and lived). **Has seen** ([theaomai](#)) describes to gaze until one grasps the significance of what they are beholding. "**God** is without the article, indicating that character, essence, or nature is stressed. "Deity in its essence" no one has ever yet seen." ([Wuest](#)) John's somewhat abrupt and surprising statement seems to fly in the face of Moses' statement "So Jacob named the place Peniel, for [he said,] "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." (Ge 32:30) But on the other hand Moses records "But He (God) said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" (Ex 33:20+)

*Is the love of the invisible God
visible in your life beloved?*

Herschel Hobbs summarizes 1Jn 4:12 -This teaches that love fulfils two functions in our lives. First, it is the visible evidence that God dwells in us. The thought is that Christians, by the practice of loving deeds, become the means by which the invisible God is seen. Second, when we practice love, God's love "is perfected in us" (1Jn 4:12b). This means that our love is the ripened fruit of His love. (BORROW [The Epistles of John](#))

*Jesus as the Word is God, and
He has revealed and explained God to humanity.
- ESV Study Bible*

James Montgomery Boice explains that "The Old Testament Theophanies (See [Theophany](#); [Theophany-2](#)), including the apparently contradictory statement in Exodus 24:10 ("they saw the God of Israel"), did not involve the **full revelation of God as He**

is in Himself but only a suggestion of what He is in form that a human being could understand." (BORROW [The Epistles of John](#))

Robert Yarbrough - God's invisibility, then, is not only a reason to exalt and venerate him in his heavenly loftiness; it is at the same time an implicit mandate for God's people to render his presence concrete by their response to him. (See [1-3 John - Page 264](#))

As an aside, since God presented Himself in a Theophany numerous times in the OT, this passage (**no one has seen God**) strongly supports that it was God's Son, Jesus Who was manifested, not God the Father (See discussion of Angel of the LORD) In the opening of this epistle John wrote "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we **have seen** with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life (Jesus the Messiah)." (1Jn 1:1+) So while it is true that "**no one has seen God**" the Father, it is not true that no one has seen God at all, because to behold Jesus was to behold the Father (Jn 14:9+).

*"A saint is a man in whom Christ lives again"
and the best demonstration of God
comes not from argument but from a life of love.*

William Barclay - It is by love that God is known (1Jn 4:12). We cannot see God (THE FATHER), because He is spirit; what we can see is His effect. We cannot see the wind, but we can see what it can do (Jn 3:8). We cannot see electricity, but we can see the effect it produces. The effect of God is love. It is when God comes into a man that he is clothed with the love of God and the love of men. God is known by His effect on that man. It has been said, "A saint is a man in whom Christ lives again" and the best demonstration of God comes not from argument but from a life of love.

John MacArthur -. Nobody can see God loving since His love is invisible. Jesus no longer is in the world to manifest the love of God. The only demonstration of God's love in this age is the church. That testimony is critical (Jn 13:35; 2Co 5:18-20). John's argument in 1Jn 4:7-12 can be summed up as: love originated in God, was manifested in His Son, and demonstrated in His people. (See [The MacArthur Bible Commentary](#))

D Edmond Hiebert explains the surprising statement that **no one has seen God** - The assumed logic is that since it is easier for us to love someone whom we can see and know directly than one whom we have never seen personally, how can they profess to know and love God whom they have never seen and yet hate the brother who is visibly present with them? For those who disparage the obligation to love the brethren, no vaunted mystical visions of God will ever enable them to attain to a vital relationship with God. John has already informed his readers that a direct vision of God awaits the time of the Parousia (1Jn 3:2+). ([1 John 4:7-21](#))

*"God dwelleth in us" though we do not see him.
The nearest approach we can have to God is by this golden way of love.
-- C H Spurgeon*

David Guzik on **no one has seen God** - In speaking of God the Father, Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:17: *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible*. Jesus declared of God the Father, *God is Spirit*, (John 4:24) meaning that God the Father has no tangible body which may be seen. Knowing God the Father is invisible should make us more humble in our relationship with Him. God the Father is not completely knowable by us; we can't completely figure out God, or know all His secrets. He is beyond us. Of course, no one has seen God the Holy Spirit at any time either, though He has represented Himself in various ways. And just as certainly, God the Son, Jesus Christ, has been seen - John himself testified to this in 1 John 1:1-3+. But of God the Father, it can truly be said, no one has seen God at any time.

*The unseen God, Who was once revealed in His Son,
is now revealed in His people if and when they love one another.*

John Stott explains why John brings up the point that **no one has seen God** writing that "the unseen God, Who was once revealed in His Son, is now revealed in His people if and when they love one another. God's love is seen in their love because their love is His love imparted to them by His Spirit (1Jn 4:13). The words do not mean that when we begin to love, God comes to dwell in us, but the reverse. Our love for one another is evidence of God's indwelling presence." (Borrow [The Letters of John](#))

THOUGHT - This begs the question dear child of God - Can others "see" the unseen God Who abides in you by the way you love others? This is a very convicting question, because I look in the mirror every morning!

RESULT OF BELIEVERS LOVING ONE ANOTHER

If (3rd class condition - potential action) **we love** ([agapao](#) - present tense - habitually) **one another** ([allelon](#) - reciprocal Christian love), **God abides** ([meno](#) - present tense - continually dwells) **in us** - What John is showing now is that there is a direct relationship

between our practice of love and our experience of God. **Love one another** occurs 3 times in this "love" section (1Jn 4:7-21) - 1Jn 4:7+, 1Jn 4:11+, 1Jn 4:12+. It was also used in 1Jn 3:11+ and 1Jn 3:23+.

As **Hiebert** explains "The practice of mutual Christian love confirms that "God dwells in us". John asserts that whenever believers practice mutual love, God's love becomes visible in the lives of those in whom He abides. The love which He has implanted in the heart of the believer through the Holy Spirit (1Jn 4:13; Ro 5:5+) is thus visibly expressed and confirms the reality of God's indwelling presence. The practice of mutual love further signifies that "His love is perfected in us"" ([1 John 4:7-21](#))

*If we love one another the unseen God is in a sense seen
by the Spirit enabled supernatural love we show to others.*

God abides ([meno](#) - present tense - continually dwells) **in us** - To Whom might **God** refer? While the Trinity indwells believers (even the Father - "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him." Jn 14:23+), this is probably best interpreted as a reference to the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Helper Jesus would ask the Father to send (Jn 14:16), Whom the Father promised (Lk 24:49, Acts 1:4, Acts 2:33) and would Himself would send (Jn 14:26), and also Whom Jesus would send (Jn 15:26, Jn 16:7). Paul says we were "sealed (sphragizo) in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is given as a pledge (arrabon = deposit, down payment) of our inheritance." (Eph 1:13-14+) In 1Jn 4:13 John says God "has given us of His Spirit." In short, the fact that God abides in us (continually -present tense) is a clear reference to the permanent relationship which God has with each believer. You cannot lose your salvation (but of course you must be genuine saved and that is part of John's purpose of this epistle - 1Jn 5:11-13) Note that our loving one another does not make or cause God to abide in us, but shows that He abides in us for we could only love one another as His Spirit abiding in us enables us.

In 1Jn 3:17+ he alludes to the "love of God" abiding in those who take care of the needs of their brethren.

Spurgeon adds "He is not far to seek. If you love one another, God is in you; he dwells in you, he is your nearest and dearest Friend, the Author of all other love. The grace of love comes from the God of love."

He reveals Himself through the lives of His children.

Men cannot see God, but they can see us.

-- Warren Wiersbe

David Guzik - Some people think the greatest evidence of God's presence or work is power. Some people think the greatest evidence of God's presence or work is popularity. Some people think the greatest evidence of God's presence or work is passionate feelings. But the greatest evidence of God's presence and work is love. Where God is present and working, there will be love.

Steven Cole comments on how this verb **abide** can be misinterpreted - Clearly, John wants us to know some things with assurance. He wants us to be solid and secure in our relationship with God. In our text, he wants us (1Jn 4:13+) to "know that we abide in Him and He in us..." In 1Jn 4:12+, John mentions God's **abiding** in us. Then in 1Jn 4:13, 15, & 1Jn 4:16, he repeats the same truth in terms of mutual abiding, God in us and we in God. John wants to give us assurance of this mutual abiding relationship. While "abide" is John's word for fellowship with God, it would be a mistake to think that only some believers enter into this abiding relationship, while other believers do not abide. To be sure, the abiding relationship grows and deepens over a lifetime. Those who have walked with Christ for decades enjoy closer fellowship with Him than those who are newer in their faith. But in John's mind, every Christian abides in Christ and Christ in him. If you are not abiding in Him and He in you, then you are not saved. So when we talk about assurance of abiding, we are talking about assurance of salvation. John's message here is...We can be assured that God abides in us and we in Him if we see His Spirit producing in us love for one another and confession of the truth about Jesus Christ. ([1 John 4:12-16 Assurance of Abiding](#)) (Bolding added)

Warren Wiersbe writes that **abide** "is used six times in 1John 4:12-16. It refers to our personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. To abide in Christ means to remain in spiritual oneness with Him, so that no sin comes between us. Because we are "born of God," we have *union* with Christ; but it is only as we trust Him and obey His commandments that we have *communion* with Him. Much as a faithful husband and wife "abide in love" though they may be separated by miles, so a believer abides in God's love. This abiding is made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1John 4:13+)." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Earlier John wrote "whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him." (1Jn 2:5+).

**PERFECTED
LOVE**

And His love (agape) is perfected (teleioo - perfect tense - attains its goal) in us - His love refers not to our love for God but His love for us. John is describing what happens when believers love one another. As they love one another, they grow in godliness and Christ-likeness and His love for mankind. In short, **His love is perfected in us**, which is the second thing demonstrated by our loving one another.

*God's love is not made perfect in angels,
but in sinners saved by His grace.*

Warren Wiersbe rightly says "God's love is perfected in the believer. Fantastic as it may seem, God's love is not made perfect in angels, but in sinners saved by His grace. We Christians are now the tabernacles and temples in which God dwells. He reveals His love through us." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

*People do not see God and they may not read the Bible,
but they do see and read the lives of Christians.*
-- Steven Cole

John Piper on **His love** - The love that you have as a born again person is no mere imitation of the divine love. It is an experience of the divine love and an extension of that love to others. ([The New Birth Produces Love](#))

*Reciprocal Christian love means not only that God lives in us
but also that his love is made complete (perfected) in us.*

John Stott - John goes further still. Reciprocal Christian love means not only that God lives in us but also that his love is made complete in us. It would be hard to exaggerate the greatness of this conception. It is so daring that many commentators have been reluctant to accept it and have suggested that the genitive in His love is not subjective ('God's love') but objective ('our love for God'; cf. 1Jn 2:5+) or definitive ('Godlike love'). But the whole paragraph is concerned with God's love and we must not stagger at the majesty of this conclusion. God's love, which originates in Himself (1Jn 4:7-8+) and was manifested in His Son (1Jn 4:9-10+), is made complete in His people (1Jn 4:12). It is '**brought to perfection within us**' (NEB). God's love for us is perfected only when it is reproduced in us or (as it may mean) 'among us' in the Christian fellowship. It is these three truths about the love of God which John uses as inducements to brotherly love. We are to love each other, **first** because God is love (1Jn 4:8-9), **secondly** because God loved us (1Jn 4:10-11+), and **thirdly** because, if we do love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us (1Jn 4:12). (BORROW [The Letters of John](#)) (Bolding added)

*Loving Christians are an evidence of the abiding,
perfected love of God (cf. 1Jn 2:5; 4:17).*

Wuest on **is perfected** (Is brought to completion, is accomplished) - If saints have this agape love habitually for one another, that shows that this love which God is in His nature, has accomplished its purpose in their lives. It has made us loving and self-sacrificial in our characters. This love has been brought to its human fullness in the lives of the saints. The verb **is perfected** is perfect tense, speaking of a past completed act having present results. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

Danny Akin on **perfected** - A person loves because God has come to dwell within him. This is how the love of God is brought to its goal.¹²⁴ The word translated "complete" (teteleiōmenē) can also be rendered "perfected." Both of these renderings seem to indicate a condition in which there is an elimination of inadequacies, but a more appropriate understanding would be that of achieving a goal—namely the practice of believers loving one another.¹²⁵ The love one has for other believers will demonstrate the fact that one is indwelt by God. The source for this kind of love is a personal and permanent union between God and the believer secured at the cross of Calvary. ([1, 2, 3 John - Page 182](#))

*"It is through man that the
'love of God' finds its fulfillment on earth."*
-- B F Westcott

Glenn Barker on **is perfected** - As God was once present in his Son, so now he is present through the community of faith. And it is in this community that love has its ultimate fulfillment. (Borrow [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#) - Abridged)

*John speaks here not of perfect people but of God's already pristine love
finding its fullest possible earthly expression as people respond
to the message of Christ and reach out to one another as a result.*

Robert Yarbrough - "**Perfected**" in 1Jn 4:12 is unlikely to refer to a state of sinless perfection in believers, which John has already rejected. Nor is John suggesting that there is something imperfect in God's love (subjective genitive; cf. Painter 2002: 272) that

believers by loving bring to perfection or fill out. The root of the perfect participle τετελειωμένη (teteleiōmenē) means “to finish, complete, or bring to the desired outcome” (cf. John 4:34; 5:36; 17:4; Rensberger 1997: 119). John speaks here not of perfect people (cf. D. Smith 1991: 110) but of God’s already pristine love finding its fullest possible earthly expression as people respond to the message of Christ and reach out to one another as a result. (See [1-3 John - Page 265](#))

W Hall Harris on is perfected - The love that comes from God, the love that He has for us, reaches perfection in our love for others, which is what God wants and what believers are commanded to do (cf. 1Jn 3:23b). ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 4:7-5:4a](#))

*God's love in us attains its goal only as we exercise it
within the body of Christ toward fellow believers.*

-- Gary Derickson

B F Westcott on is perfected - “The manifestation of active love by men witnesses to two facts: (1) the abiding of God in them, and (2) the presence of divine love in them in its most complete form. There is both the reality of fellowship and the effectiveness of fellowship” (Westcott, 151)

*The love he has for us is made visible
and complete as we love one another*

-- Max Anders

NET Note says “The love that comes from God, the love that He has for us, reaches perfection in our love for others, which is what God wants and what believers are commanded to do (see 1Jn 3:23b+).

*God's love is **proclaimed** in the Word (“God is love”) and **proved** at the cross.
But here we have something deeper: God's love is **perfected** in the believer.*

I Howard Marshall on is perfected - when we love others, God’s love for us has reached its full effect in creating the same kind of love as his in us. (Borrow [The Epistles of John in The New International Commentary](#))

Colin Kruse on is perfected - even more can be said about believers who love one another, so the author adds: and his love is made complete (**perfected**) in us. This is the second of four references the author makes to completeness of love in this letter. The first is found in 1Jn 2:5, where completeness of love for God is expressed in obedience to his word. The third and fourth references are found in 1Jn 4:17, 18, where God’s love is said to have completed its work in believers when they can face the day of judgement without fear. Here in 1Jn 4:12 God’s love is made complete in believers when they love one another. To put it in other words, the circuit of God’s love is completed when we love one another.

D Edmond Hiebert on is His love is perfected - Whenever believers are motivated by the indwelling love of God to practice a consistent brother-love, then the love of God “**is perfected**” in them. The perfect passive verb “**is perfected**” (teteleiōmenē ... estin) does not imply any previous imperfection in God’s love but rather presents God’s love as having been brought to its goal objectively in that life. ([1 John 4:7-21](#))

THOUGHT - May we all diligently strive by the power of God's Spirit to continually press on to this goal of His love **perfected** in our lives, all for His glory. Amen.

Warren Wiersbe - God’s love is **proclaimed** in the Word (“God is love”) and **proved** at the cross. But here we have something deeper: God’s love is **perfected** in the believer. Fantastic as it may seem, God’s love is not made perfect in angels, but in sinners saved by His grace. We Christians are now the tabernacles and temples in which God dwells. He reveals His love through us. (**ILLUSTRATION**) **Dr. G. Campbell Morgan**, famous British preacher, had five sons, all of whom became ministers of the Gospel. One day a visitor in their home dared to ask a personal question: “Which of you six is the best preacher?” Their united answer was, “Mother!” Of course, Mrs. Campbell Morgan had never preached a formal sermon in a church; but her life was a constant sermon on the love of God. The life of a Christian who abides in God’s love is a potent witness for God in the world. Men cannot see God, but they can see His love moving us to deeds of helpfulness and kindness. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Grant Osborne - We must not think of “**perfect**” as meaning flawless. A fully developed apple is mature, “perfect,” even if it has bumps, scabs, and bruises. None of us will be flawless and faultless in this lifetime, but we can become mature in our love for God and his people. (See [The Gospel of John, 1-3 John - Page 365](#))

Thompson - when the Elder writes that this is how [God’s] love is made complete, he means that it reaches its intended goal when it flows from God, through us, to our fellow believers. The love with which God loved us must in turn be extended to the fellowship of believers. In short, God not only gives us the command to love but has also modeled for us what true love is, just as Jesus modeled love for his disciples when he washed their feet before his death (Jn 13:1–17). Love that does not express itself concretely and in service to others is not love (1 Jn 3:16–18). ([Let Us Love One Another](#))

Let Others See Jesus in You

While passing thro' this world of sin
And others your life shall view
Be clean and pure without and within
Let others see Jesus in you.

Your life's a book before their eyes,
They're reading it thro' and thro'
Say does it point them to they skies
Do others see Jesus in you?

Then live for Christ both day and night,

Be faithful, be brave and true
And lead the lost to life and Christ,

Let others see Jesus in you.

Let others see Jesus in you.

Let others see Jesus in you.

Keep telling the story, be faithful and true.

Let others see Jesus in you.

**"By this all men will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another."**

John 13:35

Steven Cole expounds on this passage -

At first glance, 1Jn 4:12 seems out of context. John has been discussing God's love for us and our love for one another. Then, somewhat abruptly, he states, **"No one has seen God at any time."** You wonder, "Why did he throw that in here? What does God's invisibility have to do with a discussion of love?" The same words occur in the prologue to John's Gospel (John 1:18): **"No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."** But here, John continues, **"if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us."** What does he mean? He means that the unseen God, Who was historically revealed in the incarnation of the Son, is now revealed by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit in His people when they love one another. It's an amazing thought! People do not see God and they may not read the Bible, but they do see and read the lives of Christians. They read your Christian home. They read this church. They read you as you interact with others at work or at school. If they see a remarkable, other-worldly love in those places—especially if they see love when they would expect retaliation—they see God abiding in you. If they see anger, bitterness, verbal attacks, and hatred, then we are failing to "testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1Jn 4:14+). A writer named **Caecilius** (ca. A.D. 210) said of the Christians, "They know one another by secret marks and signs, and they love one another almost before they know one another." The Greek writer, **Lucian** (ca. A.D. 120-200) said of the early church, "It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator [Jesus] has put it into their heads that they are all brethren." The church father, **Tertullian**, said, "It is our care for the helpless, our practice of lovingkindness, that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. 'Look,' they say, '**How they love one another! Look how they are prepared to die for one another!**'" I wonder how often outsiders would describe modern Christians like that? John's point (in 1Jn 4:12) is that if we see God's love surfacing in our relationships with others, then we have evidence of God's abiding in us. This is especially true in situations where, if we were acting in the flesh, we would be indifferent at best or antagonistic or hateful at worst. When our knee-jerk reaction is to lash out at someone who has wronged us, but instead we feel an inner check and we speak in kindness, it is evidence that God is abiding in us. Although we cannot see God, who is spirit, we can see the evidence of His abiding in us when we love one another. ([1 John 4:12-16 Assurance of Abiding](#))

Warren Wiersbe on gives historical background to help us understand **God abides in us** - God has said something to us, and God has done something for us. But all this is preparation for the third great fact: God does something in us! We are not merely students reading a book, or spectators watching a deeply moving event. We are participants in the great drama of God's love!

(ILLUSTRATION) In order to save money, a college drama class purchased only a few scripts of a play and cut them up into the separate parts. The director gave each player his individual part in order and then started to rehearse the play. But nothing went right. After an hour of missed cues and mangled sequences, the cast gave up. At that point, the director sat the actors all on the stage and said: "Look, I'm going to read the entire play to you, so don't any of you say a word." He read the entire script aloud, and when he was finished, one of the actors said: "So that's what it was all about!" And when they understood the entire story, they were able to fit their parts together and have a successful rehearsal. When you read 1 John 4:12–16, you feel like saying, "So that's what it's all about!" Because here we discover what God had in mind when He devised His great plan of salvation.

To begin with, God's desire is to live in us. He is not satisfied simply to tell us that He loves us, or even show us that He loves us.

It is interesting to trace God's dwelling places as recorded in the Bible. In the beginning, God had fellowship with man in a personal, direct way (Gen. 3:8), but sin broke that fellowship. It was necessary for God to shed the blood of animals to cover the sins of Adam and Eve so that they might come back into His fellowship.

One of the key words in the Book of Genesis is walked. God walked with men, and men walked with God. Enoch (Gen. 5:22), Noah (Gen. 6:9), and Abraham walked with God (Gen. 17:1; 24:40).

But by the time of the events recorded in Exodus, a change had taken place: God did not simply walk with men, He lived, or dwelt, with them. God's commandment to Israel was, "And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). The first of those sanctuaries was the tabernacle. When Moses dedicated it, the glory of God came down and moved into the tent (Ex. 40:33–35).

God dwelt in the camp, but He did not dwell in the bodies of the individual Israelites.

Unfortunately, the nation sinned and God's glory departed (1 Sam. 4:21). But God used Samuel and David to restore the nation; and Solomon built God a magnificent temple. When the temple was dedicated, once again the glory of God came to dwell in the land (1 Kings 8:1–11).

But history repeated itself, and Israel disobeyed God and was taken into Captivity. The gorgeous temple was destroyed. One of the prophets of the Captivity, Ezekiel, saw the glory of God depart from it (Ezek. 8:4; 9:3; 10:4; 11:22–23).

Did the glory ever return? Yes—in the Person of God's Son, Jesus Christ! "And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14, lit.). The glory of God dwelt on earth in the body of Jesus Christ, for His body was the temple of God (John 2:18–22). But wicked men nailed His body to a cross. They crucified "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). All this was part of God's thrilling plan, and Christ arose from the dead, returned to heaven, and sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in men.

The glory of God now lives in the bodies of God's children. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (6:19, NASB) The glory of God departed from the tabernacle and the temple when Israel disobeyed God, but Jesus has promised that the Spirit will abide in us forever (John 14:16). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

No one (nothing) ([3762](#) [oudeis](#) from **ou** = not + **dé** = but + **heis** = one) Literally "but absolutely not one" no one, nothing, none at all; emphasizes not even one, not the least. **Oudeis** is used as a negating adjective (not even one) to negate a noun, denying absolutely and objectively (e.g., Lk 4:24) Note that [oudeis](#) differs from [medeis](#) which also is often translated "no one" as the negative particle **ou** differs from **me**. Thus **ou** = absolutely NOT and is objective while **me** = conditionally NOT and is subjective. For example Paul uses [oudeis](#) twice in 1 Cor 12:3+ "Therefore I make known to you that **NO ONE** speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and **NO ONE** can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."

Friberg - [oudeis](#) - (1) as an adjective, used to negate a noun no, not even one (Lk 4.24); (2) as a substantive; (a) [oudeis](#) and [oudemia](#) -- no one, nobody, none (Mt 6.24); [ouden](#) -- nothing (Mt 5.13); (b) to refer to invalid concepts worthless, of no account, meaningless (Mt 23.16); (c) [ouden](#) as an accusative of respect = in no way, in nothing at all (Gal 4.1) (Analytical Lexicon)

Has seen ([2300](#)) ([theaomai](#) from **tháomai** = to wonder, from **thaúma** = wonder, admiration <> English = theatrical spectacular performance) means to have an attentive look, to have regard for something, to contemplate, to take in with one's eyes (implying that one is impressed by what he sees - see use in Mt 22:11). **Theaomai** implies an intent contemplative gaze. The point is that it is not a mere glance or quick look, but a long, searching gaze (e.g., Lk 23:55). **Theaomai** describes intelligent beholding, a "careful and deliberate vision which interprets its object" (G. Abbott-Smith). It means to gaze at a show or demonstration or to watch as in a theater. (thus giving us the origin of our English word "*theater*"). (2) **Theaomai** can mean to see for the purpose of visiting as in Ro 15:24. (3) Finally some lexicon's (BDAG) state [theaomai](#) can mean to perceive something above and beyond what is merely seen with the eye (this nuance clearly overlaps with definition #1 above).

The apostle John uses **theaomai** in his Gospel to describe the wonder of beholding "the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn 1:14). He uses **theaomai** to describe the "Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven" and remaining on Jesus (Jn 1:32). Jesus uses when he calls on his disciples to "lift up your eyes and look on the fields that...are white for harvest." (Jn 4:35) Jesus used **theaomai** rather than a verb meaning simple sight, because He wanted His disciples not only to see the people streaming out of the city, but to contemplate the meaning and significance of this event. In Jn 11:45 "many of the Jews who came to Mary, and **saw (theaomai)** what He had done (raising Lazarus from the dead), believed in Him." These Jews were eyewitnesses to the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection from the dead. Their "seeing" including their contemplating what they saw and the result was that they believed in Jesus.

Wuest notes that "The verb is in the perfect tense. The expanded translation reads, "Deity in its essence no one has ever yet beheld, with the present result that no one has the capacity of beholding Him." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

Westcott comments that "Here the thought is of the continuous beholding that answers to abiding fellowship."

Morris on **no one has seen God** - But "the only begotten Son...hath declared Him" (John 1:18). "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," Jesus said (Jn 14:9). Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). In a lesser way, though quite real, just as we see God in Christ, so men can see God's attribute of love in us if we have allowed the Holy Spirit to bring His fruit (Gal 5:22) to perfection in our lives.

Wiersbe asks **no one has seen God** - How, then, does God reveal Himself to the world? He reveals Himself through the lives of His children. Men cannot see God, but they can see us. If we abide in Christ, we will love one another, and our love for one another will reveal God's love to a needy world. God's love will be experienced in us and then will be expressed through us. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Perfected (5048)(**teleioo** related to **teleios** from **telos** = an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal, consummate soundness, idea of being whole) means to accomplish or bring to an end or to the intended goal (telos). It means to be complete, mature, fully developed, full grown, wanting nothing necessary to completeness. **Teleioo** does not mean simply to terminate something but to carry it out to the full finish which is picked up in the translation "**perfected**". **Teleioo** signifies the attainment of consummate soundness and includes the idea of being made whole. Interestingly the Gnostics used **teleios** of one fully initiated into their mysteries and that may have been why Paul used **teleios** in this epistle.

Teleioo is in the perfect tense signifying the continuing effect of this perfection.

Wuest adds that **perfected** in the perfect tense means "has been made perfect or complete, and exists in its finished results." This represents a past fact in the saint's life and a present reality."([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

Hiebert explains that "the perfect passive verb "is perfected" (teteleiōmenē...estin) does not imply any previous imperfection in God's love but rather presents God's love as having been brought to its goal objectively in that life. (Cf. the same verb in 1Jn 2:5+.) Morgan suggests the following in illustration: "There is all the difference between its existence in the heart, and its expansion in the life, that may be observed between the root of the plant deposited in the soil and its rich and widespread foliage, and its clusters of flowers or fruits." ([1 John 4:7-21](#))

TELEIOO - 23V - **accomplish(2), accomplished(1), finish(1), fulfill(1), full number(1), made perfect(4), made...perfect(1), make...perfect(1), make perfect(1), perfect(2), perfected(7), reach...goal(1), spending the full number(1)**. Lk. 2:43; Lk. 13:32; Jn. 4:34; Jn. 5:36; Jn. 17:4; Jn. 17:23; Jn. 19:28; Acts 20:24; Phil. 3:12; Heb. 2:10; Heb. 5:9; Heb. 7:19; Heb. 7:28; Heb. 9:9; Heb. 10:1; Heb. 10:14; Heb. 11:40; Heb. 12:23; Jas. 2:22; 1 Jn. 2:5; 1 Jn. 4:12; 1 Jn. 4:17; 1 Jn. 4:18

Abides (3306)(**meno**) in simple terms means to remain in the same place or position over a period of time. It means to reside, stay, live, lodge, tarry or dwell. Meno describes something that remains where it is, continues in a fixed state, and so endures. In the present context John speaks of the intimate oneness that believers (continually - **present tense**) have with God.

Warren Wiersbe - That important little word abide (or dwell, KJV) is used six times in 1 John 4:12–16. It refers to our personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. To abide in Christ means to remain in spiritual oneness with Him, so that no sin comes between us. Because we are "born of God," we have union with Christ; but it is only as we trust Him and obey His commandments that we have communion with Him. Much as a faithful husband and wife "abide in love" though they may be separated by miles, so a believer abides in God's love. This abiding is made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:13).

MENO 24 times in First John - 1 John 2:6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 24, 27-28; 3:6, 9, 14-15, 17, 24; 4:12-13, 15-16.

(Note: four verses have more than one use)

Love (verb) (25) (agapao) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men (John 3:16), the way He loves the Son (John 3:35, 15:9, 17:23, 24). Note that **agapao** is a verb and by its verbal nature calls for action. This quality of love is not an emotion but is an action initiated by a volitional choice. "expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship." (John MacArthur)

Vine writes that "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9, 10. But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, Ro 5:8. It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself." ([Collected Writings](#))

Wuest says agape "speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

AGAPAO USES BY JOHN - Jn. 3:16; Jn. 3:19; Jn. 3:35; Jn. 8:42; Jn. 10:17; Jn. 11:5; Jn. 12:43; Jn. 13:1; Jn. 13:23; Jn. 13:34; Jn. 14:15; Jn. 14:21; Jn. 14:23; Jn. 14:24; Jn. 14:28; Jn. 14:31; Jn. 15:9; Jn. 15:12; Jn. 15:17; Jn. 17:23; Jn. 17:24; Jn. 17:26; Jn. 19:26; Jn. 21:7; Jn. 21:15; Jn. 21:16; Jn. 21:20; 1 Jn. 2:10; 1 Jn. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:10; 1 Jn. 3:11; 1 Jn. 3:14; 1 Jn. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:23; 1 Jn. 4:7; 1 Jn. 4:8; 1 Jn. 4:10; 1 Jn. 4:11; 1 Jn. 4:12; 1 Jn. 4:19; 1 Jn. 4:20; 1 Jn. 4:21; 1 Jn. 5:1; 1 Jn. 5:2; 2 Jn. 1:1; 2 Jn. 1:5; 3 Jn. 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:5; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 12:11; Rev. 20:9

Love (26) (agape) is unconditional, sacrificial love and Biblically refers to a love that God is (1Jn 4:8,16), that God shows (Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9) and that God enables in His children (fruit of the Spirit - Gal 5:22+). Agape love impels one to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of the object loved... (it) speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in the object loved, an apprehension of its preciousness. MacArthur writes that "agapē (love) is the love of self-sacrificing service (Phil. 2:2–5; Col. 3:12–14; cf. Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 10:23–24; 13:4–7), the love granted to someone who needs to be loved (Heb. 6:10; 1 Peter 2:17; cf. Rom. 12:15), not necessarily to someone who is attractive or lovable."

Agape love does not depend on the world's criteria for love, such as attractiveness, emotions, or sentimentality. Believers can easily fall into the trap of blindly following the world's demand that a lover **feel** positive toward the beloved. This is not **agape** love, but is a love based on impulse. **Impulsive love** characterizes the spouse who announces to the other spouse that they are planning to divorce their mate. Why? They reason "I can't help it. I fell in love with another person!" Christians must understand that this type of impulsive love is completely contrary to God's **decisive love**, which is decisive because He is in control and has a purpose in mind. There are many reasons a proper understanding of the truth of God's word (and of the world's lie) is critical and one of the foremost is Jesus' declaration that "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** (agape) for one another." (John 13:35).

AGAPE in 1 John - 1 John 2:5, 15; 3:1, 16-17; 1Jn 4:7-10, 12, 16 (3x), 1Jn 4:17, 1Jn 4:18 (3x) 1Jn 5:3 (Also in 2John 1:3, 6; 3John 1:6)

H A Ironside has an interesting comment on **no man has seen God** -

This is not the first time this expression is found in the Scriptures. In John 1:18 you will find the exact same words, "No man hath seen God at any time." Let's examine these controversial words, for Scripture seems to indicate that there were many instances where men saw God. Didn't God speak with Moses face to face, and didn't He put him in a cleft of the rock while He passed by? Didn't Adam speak with God in the garden? And doesn't Isaiah say that "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1)? Didn't Ezekiel have visions of God, and didn't the glory of the Lord appear to Daniel and many others? Yes, and yet it remains true that, "No man hath seen God at any time." God is a Spirit, infinite and eternal, and is Himself invisible. Christ, however, has revealed God to men. But before Jesus became incarnate, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit were all invisible. The Old Testament characters of whom it is written that they saw God, saw a form that God took-a Theophany-by which He revealed Himself to them. They saw His glory and splendor, but they could not see His deity. **No one, in a sense, has ever seen you.** People have seen your body, your face, and your eyes, but they have never seen the **real you**-the spirit that looks out through your eyes. We cannot see the real man, for under

present conditions the spirit of man is invisible. We shall never really see one another as long as we are in the flesh, but in eternity we shall see and know one another in spirit. No one has ever seen the sun. Someone might object to that and say, "How can you tell me that I have never seen the sun! Of course I have seen it. I have seen it rise, I have seen it moving through the heavens, I have seen it set as it dips into the west." But you are mistaken. You have never seen the sun! You have seen the robe of glory that envelopes it, but you cannot pierce that glory and see behind the flame that enfolds that great globe. That would be impossible. It is the sun that gives out that glory and you cannot even gaze on that in its full strength at noonday for one minute, because of its blinding glare. A great astronomer was so delighted when one of the finest telescopes was first invented that, in his haste to look at the sun through it, he forgot to put the dark glass over the lens. Swinging that great instrument into place, he leaned down and with the naked eye looked through the lens at the sun. The next moment he uttered a cry of pain as the blinding light burned his eye, destroying its sight completely! Plato said, "The radiant light is the shadow of God." David declared of God, Thou "coverest thyself with light as with a garment" (Ps 104:2). The light, the glory, the radiance is just the garment, and God is behind it all, invisible. We read in John 1:18 that "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Jesus Christ came into the world as God revealed in the flesh and made God known to man. We understand God as we could not have done otherwise. Jesus said, "**He that hath seen me hath seen the Father**" (John 14:9). In Hebrews 1:3 we read that Christ is "the express image" of the Father. In other words, Jesus is the exact expression of God's character. All that God is is seen in Jesus. Jesus walked this world for a brief period of thirty-three and one-half years, and during that time God was manifest, God was seen on the earth, in the person of His Son. When Jesus went back to Heaven was God left without any manifestation on earth? We read, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God [abideth] in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). God dwells in all believers, but the Greek word for dwelleth is different from that for abideth. If we love one another, we exhibit the new and divine nature. If we walk in love, then men can see God in us, for God abideth in us. If we are living in fellowship with God, we are manifesting and making Him known.

We have read the account of the professed conversion of the President of China (Chiang Kai-shek). We hope there has been a real work in his soul, but only eternity will tell. I was reading how he came to his Christian wife who was saved long before he made a profession, and said, "I can't understand these Christians. They have been treated most abominably here. They have been robbed, beaten, and many of them killed. They have been persecuted fearfully, and yet I never find one of them retaliating. Anytime they can do anything for China and for our people, they are ready to do it. I do not understand them." "Well," said his wife, "that is the very essence of Christianity. They do that because they are Christians." That is how God is manifest in China, and how you and I are called on to manifest Him wherever we may be. There are many who will never read the Bible, but they are reading us. They are looking at our lives. How much of God is really seen in us?

You are writing a gospel, a chapter a day,
By deeds that you do, by words that you say.
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true;
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

People may never read the Gospel of Matthew, never look at the Gospel of Luke, never heed the Gospel of Mark, and never consider the Gospel of John, but they are reading the gospel of you—they are watching you, listening to you, and observing you. They are getting their ideas of Christ and of God from what they hear and see in you.

A number of years ago I was down in Ganado, Arizona, visiting a Presbyterian mission. In the hospital there was a poor Navajo woman who had been desperately ill but had been nursed back to life and health through the Christian missionary doctor and nurses. She was a poor Indian woman who had been cast out by her own people when they thought she was going to die. She had been thrown behind a clump of brush and left there for three or four days. It was the middle of August when the heat is terrific during the daytime and the nights become bitterly cold. There she lay without food or drink, suffering terribly. This missionary doctor found her, brought her to the hospital, and did everything that Christian love and surgical skill could suggest. At last he brought her back to health. After nine weeks in the hospital, she began to wonder about the love shown to her and said to the nurse, "I can't understand it. Why did he do all that for me? He is a white man and I am an Indian. My own people threw me out. I can't understand it. I've never heard of anything like this before." The Navajo nurse, a sweet Christian girl, said to her, "You know, it is the love of Christ that made him do that." "What do you mean by the love of Christ? Who is this Christ? Tell me more about Him." The nurse was afraid she would not tell it in the right way and so called the missionary doctor. He sat down and talked to her, and

day by day unfolded the wonderful story. After a few weeks (for she could take in only a little at a time) the hospital staff thought she understood enough to make her decision. They had a special prayer meeting for her then gathered around her bed and prayed that God by His Spirit would open her blind eyes. Again they told her the story of God's love, and asked, "Can't you trust this Savior? Turn from the idols you have worshiped, and trust Him as the Son of the living God!" She looked at them with her big dark Indian eyes and was silent a long time. Then the door to her room opened and the doctor stepped in. Her face lit up and she said, "If Jesus is anything like the doctor, I can trust Him forever," and she came to Christ. Do you see what had reached her? She had seen divine love manifested in a man. That is what you and I are called to exhibit to the world.

"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth [abideth] in us, and his love is perfected in us." The love that was revealed so fully in Jesus is now being revealed in those who have trusted in the risen Christ. They are called to make known to a lost world the same wondrous love that led Him to go to the cross. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

Love Extravagantly - Dan Wilt - [A Well-Worn Path: Thirty-One Daily Reflections](#)

Today, the body of Christ will experience extravagant love flowing from me.

1 John 4:11–12 calls us—unabashedly and without reserve—to love one another. In fact, it suggests that the invisible God is revealed to the world when people see us generously, deeply acting in love toward the family of God.

In his famous sermon "[The Weight of Glory](#)," C. S. Lewis suggested that, one day, the person in the faith whom we find most difficult to love will become a creature so glorious in the presence of God that we will be strongly tempted to fall down and worship them.

In other words dignify your brothers and sisters in Christ today, despite their flaws, by extravagantly expressing unconditional favor toward them. Call Christ forward in them. Give them the gifts of your time, energy, and encouragement. If you can take that step toward them, God will show Himself to everyone who meets you.

Prayer: Father, I have been so loved and graciously forgiven by You, how can I harbor bitterness against those You also love? Forgive me for missing the mark, and, today, empower me to love beyond my own capacity—extravagantly.

Mormons Answered Verse by Verse - Borrow [Mormons : answered verse by verse : Reed, David A](#) or see [Mormons Answered Verse by Verse](#)

1 John 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

The King James Bible published by Mormons for their own use (Salt Lake City, 1990) features a footnote to this verse referring to the Joseph Smith Translation and giving its rendering: "No man hath seen God at any time, *except them who believe* . . ." [italics and ellipsis theirs].

For a refutation of this addition to the Bible, see the discussion of John 1:18, a text in which Smith made a similar change in his "translation," as well as the discussion of the Bible in chapter 3: "Mormon Scripture."

John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Since Joseph Smith claimed to have seen God the Father, this verse proved to be a problem for him. However, rather than back off from his claim of having seen God, he sought to change Scripture. Thus Mormons are able to turn to their Doctrine and Covenants and read, "For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God"—from a revelation allegedly received by Joseph Smith in November, 1831 (Doctrine and Covenants 67:11).

Not satisfied simply to have added this 'exception' by means of a personal revelation, Smith went on to retranslate the text of John's Gospel itself. Thus his "translation" of the Bible presents John 1:19 as saying, "And no man hath seen God at any time, except he hath borne record of the Son; for except it is through him no man can be saved."

On what basis did Smith change the Bible text to conform to his thinking? Did he render some Greek words differently to produce this new wording? No, because the Greek words in the manuscripts Bible translators have been using for years could not possibly be rendered that way. Did Smith discover other ancient manuscripts with different wording? No, he did not claim any such discovery. On what basis, then, did he

produce such a radically different “translation”? Again, the claim was that he was personally “inspired” to do so—even though his rendering has no basis in any existing ancient manuscript and in fact contradicts the hundreds of Greek manuscripts preserved from ancient times.

It should also be pointed out to Mormons that Joseph Smith’s claim to have seen God the Father and Jesus Christ in his “First Vision” also contradicts Mormon scripture. Doctrine and Covenants 84:21, 22 says that “without the ordinances ... and the authority” of the Melchizedek Priesthood, “without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.” Yet Smith claimed to see God the Father in his “First Vision” several years before he allegedly received the Melchizedek Priesthood.

See also the discussions of Genesis 32:30, Exodus 24:10, 11; 33:11; Deuteronomy 4:2; 1 John 4:12; and chapter 3, “Mormon Scripture.”

James Smith - LOVES FOUR PREPOSITIONS.

1 John 4:16, 9,12, 17.

I. "Toward us"—the Direction of love (4:9).

II. "To us"—the Intention of love (4:16).

III. "In us"—the Habitation of love (2:15; 3:17; 4:12).

IV. "With us"—the Perfection of love (4:17, margin). "Herein hath love been perfected with us" (A. V., margin). Suggesting a greater measure of the love of God dwelling within us, and a greater realisation, by mind and heart, of the greatness of His love.

ILLUSTRATIONS - Bible knowledge alone does not take the place of personal experience of God’s love. In fact, it can be a dangerous substitute if we are not careful. Helen came home from a youth retreat greatly enthused over what she had learned. “We had some terrific sessions on how to have personal devotions,” she told her sister Joyce. “I plan to have my devotions every single day.”

A week later, while Joyce was running the vacuum cleaner, she heard Helen screaming, “Do you have to make all that noise? Don’t you know I’m trying to have my devotions?” And the verbal explosion was followed by the slamming of a door.

Helen still had to learn that personal devotions are not an end in themselves. If they do not help us love God and love one another, they are accomplishing little. The Bible is a revelation of God’s love; and the better we understand His love, the easier it should be for us to obey Him and love others.

A second consideration is that unless we love the lost, our verbal witness to them will be useless. The Gospel message is a message of love. This love was both declared and demonstrated by Jesus Christ. The only way we can effectively win others is to declare the Gospel and demonstrate it in how we live. Too much “witnessing” today is a mere mouthing of words. People need an expression of love. One reason why God permits the world to hate Christians is so that Christians may return love for the world’s hatred

“Pastor, the Bible tells us to love our neighbors, but I doubt that anybody could love my neighbors,” Mrs. Barton said at the close of a Sunday School lesson. “I’ve tried to be nice to them, but it just doesn’t work.”

“Perhaps ‘being nice to them’ isn’t the real answer,” the pastor explained. “You know, it’s possible to be nice to people with the wrong motive.”

“You mean as though you’re trying to buy them off?”

“Something like that. I think you and I had better pray that God will give you a true spiritual love for your neighbors. If you love them in a Christian way, you’ll not be able to do them any damage,” the pastor pointed out.

It took some weeks, but Mrs. Barton grew in her love for her neighbors; and she also found herself growing in her own spiritual life.

“My neighbors haven’t changed a whole lot,” she told the prayer group, “but my attitude toward them has really changed. I used to do things for them to try to win their approval. But now I do things for Jesus’ sake, because He died for them—and it makes all the difference in the world!” ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

No one has ever seen God: but if we love one another . . . his love is made complete in us. - 1 John 4:12

TODAY IN THE WORD

When pastor Scott Wright first met his future wife, he wasn’t a Christian. No doubt he noticed her beautiful eyes and winsome smile, but what he recalls most from that time was how she and her friends loved each other. They really enjoyed being together. Prior to

meeting his wife, Scott thought he knew how to have fun—parties, baseball games, late nights drinking. But the love and joy he encountered in this new group wasn't like anything that he'd seen before. Eventually this is what drew Scott to Christ.

The popular chorus “And they'll know we are Christians by our love” captures Scott's experience. Millions of people like him have been “loved” into the kingdom. Given the power of Christian love, it's no wonder Paul prayed that the Thessalonians' love would increase.

Recall from yesterday Paul's praise to God for the good report about the Thessalonians. The benediction recorded in today's passage flows naturally from that gratitude. Notice first the affirmation of Christ's deity. Many scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians is one of Paul's earliest letters, which counters the popular idea that the very early church didn't affirm that Jesus was God.

From this, Paul turns to love. Notice that Paul prays that the Thessalonians would not only love each other, but also love everyone else. It's easy to love those within your own circle, but love extended to outsiders is powerful. For the Thessalonians this included loving their persecutors. Finally Paul prays that the Thessalonians would be strengthened to be holy and blameless in God's presence. Here holiness indicates being set apart for God, and blameless is a legal term that describes a believer's standing before God. Here we see another link between godly living now and Christ's future return.

Today's prayer anticipates the rest of the letter, where holiness (1Th 4:1-8), love (1Th 4:9-12), and Christ's return (1Th 4:13-5:11) will be discussed further.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Today's prayer can be prayed for all believers everywhere because love and holiness should always be increasing in every believer's life. The connection between love and holiness can be easily overlooked, but as Bible scholar D. Edmund Hiebert aptly notes, “An unloving man cannot be a holy man.” Notice also that the process of standing blameless at Christ's return begins now. Consider adopting this wonderful prayer for yourself and other believers in your life, such as members of a Bible study group or choir.

A W Tozer - The Spirit Is Emotion (See [Tozer on the Holy Spirit: A 366-Day Devotional - Page 19](#))

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. —1 John 4:12

Another quality of the indwelling Fire is emotion.... What God is in His unique essence cannot be discovered by the mind nor uttered by the lips, but those qualities in God which may be termed rational, and so received by the intellect, have been freely set forth in the sacred Scriptures.

They do not tell us what God is, but they do tell us what God is like, and the sum of them constitute a mental picture of the Divine Being seen, as it were, afar off and through a glass darkly.

Now the Bible teaches that there is something in God which is like emotion. He experiences something which is like our love, something that is like our grief, that is like our joy. And we need not fear to go along with this conception of what God is like....God has said certain things about Himself, and these furnish all the grounds we require.

Once the seeking heart finds God in personal experience there will be no further problem about loving Him. To know Him is to love Him and to know Him better is to love Him more.

WE CANNOT SEE GOD WITH HUMAN EYES

No one has ever seen God. 1 John 4:12

God is invisible. He is spirit and light and love. He's in all places at all times. One of the reasons Jesus came to earth was so people could see what God is like. Whoever saw Jesus saw God the Father. Jesus only ever did what He saw His Father doing. Grow Your Faith God told Moses no one could survive seeing the face of God (see Ex. 33:20). One day, we'll get new bodies that can endure the pure holiness of God. In the meantime, we can invite His holy presence into our hearts and lives in ever-increasing measure. Grow Your Child's Faith Sometimes it's hard to love a God we can't see. But think of it like loving people you know but don't live near. Those people are there and your love for them is huge even though you can't see them in real life today. Dear Father, I wish I could see You. But I'm so glad You're everywhere so I'm never really alone. Amen.

THE INVISIBILITY OF GOD [Walking with God Day by Day](#)

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. 1 JOHN 4:12

Why does God say, “No man hath seen God at any time”? Why does John suddenly introduce this idea of the invisibility of God?

John does not say that we cannot love God except through loving our brethren; that is not his argument. Nor does he say that we can only love God by means of loving our brethren. Rather, he tells us that we are to love God—that we can love God and that we should love Him.

It seems to me that John is here introducing a new theme, a new idea, into his great discussion of the question of loving the brethren. And this new theme I would describe as the theme of assurance of salvation; it is the whole question of our knowledge of God and of the way in which we can know God. In other words, I am suggesting that John here is linking up with that with which he left off at the end of verse 8. Let me reconstruct it to you in this way: “Beloved,” he says, “let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (verses 7-8, 12).

“So,” says John in effect, “it is important that you love the brethren from the standpoint of your own assurance of salvation and from the standpoint of your fellowship with God.” John is more like a poet than a logician. Although he tends to arrive at his position in circles instead of straight lines, though there is something of the mystic in his thinking, nevertheless there is firm logic at the back of it; there is a definite line of reason.

It is important that you love the brethren from the standpoint of your own assurance of salvation.

Get It Together - Nancy Leigh DeMoss (See [The Quiet Place: Daily Devotional Readings - Page 30](#))

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.—1 John 4:12

EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, was the [epicenter of a revival that swept much of Canada and portions of the United States in the early 1970s](#). During the initial days of this movement, two brothers were marvelously reconciled who had not spoken to each other for two years—even though they attended the same church! God broke through their hardness and pride one evening, and they fell sobbing into each other’s arms. The church was amazed at the drastic change in the two men, and God greatly used their testimony to spread and deepen the work of revival.

Right relationships—especially within the family of God—are among our most powerful means of communicating the gospel. “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14). Through the cross of Christ, those who were once separated from God can now draw near to Him. And through that same cross, the “dividing wall of hostility” that so easily rises between us and others has been broken down as well, making it possible for us to be reconciled, to live at peace together as those who were once estranged humble themselves before Him.

Revival and reconciliation are inseparable. When believers cannot get along with one another, when we fail to resolve conflicts biblically, we actually discredit the gospel. But when God’s people are reconciled to each other, we demonstrate the power of the cross and make it believable to others. Who in your life could be the next testimony to His reconciling work as you ask for His grace to break through in that relationship?

If you have done all you think you can do to heal a damaged relationship, don’t hesitate to ask God for a miracle. Keep praying. Keep loving. To the extent it is possible, keep pursuing reconciliation. God desires it as much or more than you do!

IMAGE OF GOD

It seems to be a stumbling-block to many in this world that they cannot see God. ‘If only I could see God I would believe in Him’, they say (ED: THAT IS NOT TRUE! THEY STILL WOULD NOT BELIEVE IN HIM. MOST OF ISRAEL WHO SAW GOD IN JESUS REJECTED HIM!). There are two fundamental reasons why mankind cannot see God. The first lies in the very nature of God and is, simply, that He cannot be seen, 1 Tim. 6:16. He is a spirit being and therefore invisible to the human eye. ‘No man hath seen God at any time’, John 1:18; 1 John 4:12. Men have seen something of His glory, and they have seen manifestations of God, known as theophanies, but they have never seen Him in His essence. God’s answer to this problem was to send His Son into the world. Because Christ is God, He can reveal God to mankind. Therefore, Christ is the image, the perfect manifestation, of God. He could say, ‘he that hath seen me hath seen the Father’, John 14:9.

The second problem in seeing God is in the spiritual sense. Here the problem does not lie in the nature of God but in the nature of man. Mankind is sinful and being sinful is neither able to see God nor to understand Him. This problem is compounded by the fact that Satan himself, the god of this world, has deliberately and maliciously blinded the hearts of sinners so that they cannot see God’s truth.

How then, can God overcome this blinding of the minds of sinners? In the beginning, when He created the heavens and the earth,

He commanded light to shine out of primeval darkness with the majestic words, 'Let there be light', Gen. 1:3. The God of creation in the Old Testament is the God of re-creation in the New. However, with spiritual blindness, He does not merely command light to shine into the hearts of men; His Son is the light that shines into their hearts. This light shines out of spiritual darkness to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This is a sovereign act of God in salvation, for without it, a sinner, as Paul knew, would remain bound in the darkness of ignorance and sin, unable and unwilling to see. Satan has indeed great power over the hearts of men. Yet, God has the greater power, to over-rule and over-ride this blindness, enabling men to see the truth and believe it.

A W Tozer - Jesus Asks Us to Love the Unlovely (See [Evenings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings - Page 323](#))

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.
1 John 4:12

In his earthly ministry, our Lord Jesus loved babies, publicans, harlots and sick people—and He loved them spontaneously and individually!

The person who claims to follow Christ cannot afford to do otherwise.

A peril always confronting the minister is that he may come unconsciously to love religious and philosophic ideas rather than saints and sinners. It is altogether possible to feel for the world of lost men the same kind of detached affection that the naturalist Fabre, say, felt for a hive of bees or a hill of black ants. They are something to study, to learn from, possibly even to help, but nothing to weep over or die for!

Where this attitude prevails it soon leads to a stilted and pedantic kind of preaching. The minister assumes that his hearers are as familiar with history, philosophy and theology as he is, so he indulges in learned allusions, makes casual references to books and writers wholly unknown to the majority of people who listen to him, and mistakes the puzzled expression on the faces of his parishioners for admiration of his brilliance!

Why religious people continue to put up with this sort of thing, as well as to pay for it and support it, is beyond me. I can only add it to the long list of things I do not and probably never will understand.

John Henry Jowett - THE LOVE OF GOD 1 John 4:7-14

LET me more assiduously think of God's love. Let me sit down to it. In the National Gallery can be seen two sorts of people. There are the mere vagrants, who are always "on the move," passing from picture to picture, without seeing any. And there are the students, who sit down, and contemplate, and meditate, and appropriate, and saturate. And there are vagrants in respect to the love of the Lord. They have a passing glimpse, but the impression is not vital and vitalizing, and there are the students, who are always gazing, and who are continually crying, "O the depth of the riches of the love of God in Christ!" "His riches are unsearchable!"

And God's love is the creator of my love. "While I muse the fire burns." I am kindled into the same holy passion. That is to say, contemplation determines character. We acquire the hues of the things to which we cling. To hold fellowship with love is to become loveful and lovely. "We love because He first loved us."

And then, in the third place, it is through my love that I know my Lord. "Everyone that loveth knoweth God." Love is the lens through which I discern the secret things of God.

Matthew Henry - Wondrous Love

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. 1 John 4:12

The Father sent the Son; he willed his coming into this world. The apostle attests this. And whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God. This confession includes faith in the heart as the foundation; makes acknowledgment with the mouth to the glory of God and Christ, and profession in the life and conduct, against the flatteries and frowns of the world. There must be a day of universal judgment. Happy those who shall have holy boldness before the Judge at that day; knowing he is their Friend and Advocate! Happy those who have holy boldness in the prospect of that day, who look and wait for it, and for the Judge's appearance! True love to God assures believers of God's love to them. Love teaches us to suffer for him and with him; therefore we may trust that we shall also be glorified with him. We must distinguish between the fear of God and being afraid of him; the fear of God imports high regard and veneration for God. Obedience and good works, done from the principle of love, are not like the servile toil of one who unwillingly labors from dread of a master's anger. They are like that of a dutiful child, who does services to a beloved father, which benefit his brethren, and are done willingly. It is a sign that our love is far from perfect, when our doubts, fears, and apprehensions of God, are many. Let heaven and earth stand amazed at his love ... The love of God in Christ, in the

hearts of Christians from the Spirit of adoption, is the great proof of conversion.

THE POWER OF PRAYER - 1 John 4:11-12 - [Good Night, God: Night Time Devotions to End Your Day](#)

Nan stood at the window one winter day watching the wind whipping the pine trees. The cold rain had sneaked in the night before. Early that morning, she had struggled to get out of bed as the extreme cold and dampness wreaked havoc on her joints.

At the post office, everyone seemed to feel as she did. No one smiled, and everyone seemed to be struggling through the day. She decided then and there to at least change her own outlook. She smiled—not a forced smile, but a caring smile that radiated the love of God. For some, she whispered a “flash prayer” that their day would be blessed by the Heavenly Father.

Her smiles brought blessings from God in the form of a grandmother who rushed to her side to share a funny story, a man who asked her opinion on which handbag to buy for his wife, and the boy who allowed her to take his place in the express lane.

Nan remembered how a smile began a friendship with a young grocery store bagger who had Down's syndrome. One winter day, with snow clouds slung low across the sky, the young man carried her groceries to her car. Digging in her purse for a tip, she was embarrassed when she found she had nothing to give him.

“I’m sorry,” she said, not wanting to disappoint the young man.

A smile as bright as the summer sun spread across his face. “That’s okay,” he said. Then he wrapped his arms around her. “I love you,” he said. Shivering in the cold, she whispered a “flash prayer” for this special child of God. “Lord, bless this precious child,” she whispered.

Sometimes the most unexpected encounters can teach us a lesson in humility, but the greatest lesson in humility is found in Jesus Christ. (Nanette Thorsen-Snipes, *Southern Lifestyles*, Summer 1996, p. 38.)

Tonight, whisper a “flash prayer” for someone you saw today.

Family Trademarks - The Aran Islands, off the west coast of Ireland, are known for their beautiful sweaters. Patterns are woven into the fabric using sheep's wool to craft the garments. Many of them relate to the culture and folklore of these small islands, but some are more personal. Each family on the islands has its own trademark pattern, which is so distinctive that if a fisherman were to drown it is said that he could be identified simply by examining his sweater for the family trademark.

In John's first letter, the apostle describes things that are to be trademarks of those who are members of God's family. In 1 John 3:1, John affirms that we are indeed part of God's family by saying, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” He then describes the trademarks of those who are the children of God, including, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (4:7).

Because “love is of God,” the chief way to reflect the heart of the Father is by displaying the love that characterizes Him. May we allow His love to reach out to others through us—for love is one of our family trademarks.

Father, teach me to love with the love of Christ that others might see Your love reflected in my care and concern for them. May Your love drive and dominate my responses to life and to others. By Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Love is the family resemblance the world should see in followers of Christ.