

1 John 4:8 Commentary

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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 4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love:

Greek - o me agapon (PAP) ouk egno (3SAI) ton theon hoti o theos agape estin (3SPAI) .

KJV 1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

BGT 1 John 4:8 μ γαπ ν ο κ γνω τ ν θε ν, τι θε ς γ πη σ τ ν.

NET 1 John 4:8 The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

CSB 1 John 4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

ESV 1 John 4:8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

NIV 1 John 4:8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

NLT 1 John 4:8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

NRS 1 John 4:8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

NJB 1 John 4:8 Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love.

NAB 1 John 4:8 Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

YLT 1 John 4:8 he who is not loving did not know God, because God is love.

MIT 1 John 4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

GWN 1 John 4:8 The person who doesn't love doesn't know God, because God is love.

BBE 1 John 4:8 He who has no love has no knowledge of God, because God is love.

RSV 1 John 4:8 He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

NKJ 1 John 4:8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

ASV 1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Wuest - The one who is not habitually loving has not come to know God, because God as to His nature is love.

Amplified - He who does not love has not become acquainted with God [does not and never did know Him], for God is love.

Wiersbe's paraphrase - "The person who does not have this divine kind of love has never entered into a personal, experiential knowledge of God. What he knows is in his head, but it has never gotten into his heart."

- Jn 2:4,9 3:6 John 8:54,55
- **God is:** 1Jn 1:5 Ex 34:6-7 Ps 86:5,15 2Co 13:11 Eph 2:4 Heb 12:29
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

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

1 John 4:6 And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. **God is love**, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

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

NO LOVE, NO GOD KNOW LOVE, KNOW GOD

A stranger to love

is a stranger to God

-- David Smith

Jon Courson writes "As John puts the clutch in and changes gears a bit, he tells us that even though we are to test the spirits, we must not become cynical. Although we are to be able to identify heresy and pseudo-spirituality, we must also be those who love, for God is love." (See [Jon Courson's Application Commentary](#))

The one who does not love ([agapao](#) present tense = their general direction) **does not** (ou - absolutely does not) **know** ([ginosko](#) - aorist) **God** ([theos](#)), **for** ([hoti](#)) **God** ([theos](#)) **is** (present tense) **love** ([agape](#)) - **Love** ([agapao](#)) is in the present tense calling for this to be one's lifestyle (none of us will ever achieve "perfection," but it should be our "general direction!"). Distinguish John's word for love from the love that family members have for one another, for their love is natural, while the love John describes is supernatural and is only possible for one who possesses the Holy Spirit. It follows that supernatural love gives a clear marker by which we can all test our profession of faith in Christ. Children of God should imitate their Father (Eph 5:1-2+). Since God is **love**, His children, enabled by His Spirit, should seek to continually demonstrate His **love**. To never demonstrate God's love indicates that one is not a *possessor* but a *pretender*., i.e., he professes to know God, but is a liar as proven by his loveless (speaking of supernatural, not natural love) lifestyle. Be aware that there are some commentaries that say exactly the opposite of what John is saying -- they make statements such as "*it is possible to be saved and not love*" They try to rationalize this dangerous, deceptive interpretation by saying such a person is saved, but they are just not mature. To be sure, as we grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ (2Pe 3:18+), we will grow in our ability to manifest His love, but to never manifest His love is a lie from the pit of Hell! Others say the lack of love is because the person does not have intimate fellowship with God, and so they are not "*connecting with the nature of God's love*." Woe! The very verb **know** ([ginosko](#)) speaks of "intimate fellowship" and directly counters such specious speculation! While a genuine believer may not always manifest divine love to other believers, to **never** demonstrate such love John says is to demonstrate that one does not **know God**. And to not **know God** means one is still dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1+)! the Apostle John could not have stated this critical truth (warning) any more clearly!

The person who is born of God (1Jn 2:29; 3:9; 5:1) is a window through which the love of God shines into the world.

-- Simon Kistemaker

As **John MacArthur** says "**Those whose lives are not characterized by love for others are not Christians, no matter what they claim**. The Jewish religionists (scribes, Pharisees, and other leaders) of Jesus' day, as well as the false teachers in the church of John's day, knew a lot about God, but they did not really know Him (cf. 1Ti 6:20; 2Ti 3:7+). The absence of God's love in their lives revealed their unregenerate condition as conclusively as did their aberrant theology." (See [The MacArthur Commentary](#)) (Bolding Added)

Love for fellow Christians provides proof of spiritual birth and relationship with God.

-- Bruce Barton

Warren Wiersbe - We must understand "he that loveth not knoweth not God" (1 John 4:8) in this light. Certainly many unsaved people love their families and even sacrifice for them. And no doubt many of these same people have some kind of intellectual understanding of God. What, then, do they lack? They lack a personal experience of God. To paraphrase 1 John 4:8, "The person who does not have this divine kind of love has never entered into a personal, experiential knowledge of God. What he knows is in his head, but it has never gotten into his heart." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

If there is never any love felt or shown for others, it is a good indication that one has never been converted from sin in salvation.

-- Chris Benfield

D Edmond Hiebert agrees writing that "The negative with the present-tense participle (ho mē agapōn) pictures one who is unloving in **attitude and practice**. Again John's picture includes all those so characterized. The absence of love in the life of any individual proves that he "knoweth not God" (ouk egnō ton theon); **he has never come to know God personally**. The aorist tense apparently refers back to the time of his professed conversion. Not knowing this distinctive love reveals that he is still a **stranger to God**. The absence of this God-given love in his heart and life disqualifies such an individual as a trustworthy representative and interpreter of God because of the nature of God as love." ([1 John 4:7-21](#)) (Bolding added)

Unbelievers absolutely are unable to love with [agape](#) love for they do not have the divine nature (2Pe 1:4+), do not know the Divine Source (God is love 1Jn 4:8) and do not possess the Divine Power (Spirit - Gal 5:22+).

R. Gene Reynolds speaks to the deceptive danger of professing to be a Christian and yet failing to bear the fruit of love - A person who is living sinfully, who *knows* he is living sinfully, who *enjoys* living in such a manner, who intends to *continue* that sinful way of living—that person does not have the Holy Spirit living within him. The very fact that he is 'comfortable' about his sin is proof of the Spirit's absence. His spiritual vital sign registers 'no life.' (From [Assurance: You can know you're a Christian](#) See also Gerald Borchert's book "[Assurance and Warning](#)")

Love is a personal activity, not an abstract quality.

-- Gary Derickson

[A T Robertson](#) adds that "Present active articular participle of agapaō = "*keeps on not loving*." Considering that this agape love is divine love implies that it must have a supernatural source, the indwelling Spirit (Gal 5:22-23+). So if a man loves with this quality of love, it is clear indication he has the Spirit of Christ. On the other hand the failure to demonstrate agape love is a clear indication that this person lacks the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

A person cannot come into a real relationship with a loving God without being transformed into a loving person.

-- I Howard Marshall

As **W E Vine** says "**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, cp. Dt 7:7, 8. Love had its perfect expression among men in the Lord Jesus Christ, 2Cor 5:14+; Ep 2:4<+; Ep 3:19+; Ep 5:2+; Christian love is the fruit of His Spirit in the Christian, Galatians 5:22<+. Christian love has God for its primary object, and expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to His commandments, John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1Jn 2:5<+; 1Jn 5:3<+; 2Jn 1:6. Self-will, that is, self-pleasing, is the negation of love to God." ([Collected Writings](#))

To know God means to be in a deep relationship to Him

—to share His life and enjoy His love.

-- Warren Wiersbe

Does not know God - John uses the negative **ou** which conveys absolute negation. This individual absolutely does not know God. In other words they have never been born again and are not genuine believers regardless of what they claim! This is not being judgmental. This is God's Word and He alone is the Judge (Who is also love!).

Love and knowledge of God

are two sides of the same coin.

-- Simon Kistemaker

John Stott - For the loveless "Christian" to profess to know God and to have been born of God is like claiming to be intimate with a foreigner whose language we cannot speak, or to have been born of parents whom we do not in any way resemble. It is to fail to manifest the nature of him whom we claim as our Father (born of God) and our Friend (knows God). Love is as much a sign of Christian authenticity as is righteousness (1Jn 2:29<+). (Borrow [The Letters of John](#))

Max Anders - true love—love that includes loving God and the full expression of love for others, namely telling them about salvation in Jesus—is characteristic only of true Christians....A person saved by love and indwelt with love must love. We may have trouble loving perfectly, but there is a big difference between not loving perfectly and not loving at all. ([Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 & 3 John](#))

Steven Cole - The false teachers claimed to know God in a secret, deeper sense, but John is saying that they do not know God at all. They are not born again, because they do not practice biblical love. Their teaching and their behavior simply promoted self, not Christ. John's main application here is that children take on the characteristics of their parents. If we have been born of the God who is love, and thus have come to know Him, we will be growing in love. Or, the opposite is also true. The one who does not love shows that he does not know God. We need to take this to heart in a serious way. There are many in evangelical churches that claim to be born again, but they do not love others and they do not even make an effort to do so. They are angry, unkind, impatient, abusive in their speech, self-centered in their daily lives, and judgmental of others. They spread malicious gossip with great delight, and they are defensive if you try to point out any of these sins to them. Of such people, **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** says (The Love of God [Crossway], p. 45), "*Oh, my heart grieves and bleeds for them ...; they are pronouncing and proclaiming that they are not born of God. They are outside the life of God; ... there is no hope for such people unless they repent and turn to Him.*" **John's first point is, because God is love, if we are His true children, then we must love one another.** ([1 John 4:7-11 Why We Must Love](#)) (Bolding added)

[Vincent](#) on **does not know** - "(Know is in) The **aorist tense**: did not know, from the beginning. He never knew... Truth and love stand related to each other. Loving is the condition of knowing.

[A T Robertson](#) adds that this is "Timeless **aorist** active indicative of ginōskō which means he has absolutely no acquaintance with God, never did get acquainted with Him.

Does... know (ginosko) refers generally to knowledge gained by experience, not just by an accumulation of facts. In this case the knowledge has to do with the fact that there is absolutely no evidence that this person has experienced the enabling power of God's **Spirit**. For them "the old things (have not) passed away" and "new things have (not) come." (2Cor 5:17) The only way to love with **agape love** is enabled by the Spirit (Ro 5:5+, Gal 5:22-23+) This person has no inherent power to manifest this supernatural God-like love. Thus they do not know the God Who is love!

W Hall Harris - This is in context most likely a reference to the opponents, who (in the author's opinion) have demonstrated by their failure to love their fellow believers that they are not genuine Christians. The only specific moral fault the author ever charges his opponents with is failure to show love for fellow believers when they are in need (1John 3:17+). ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 4:7-5:4a](#))

"If anyone separates faith from love

it is as if he were trying to take away heat from the sun"

-- John Calvin

Warren Wiersbe paraphrases 1Jn 4:8 - "The person who does not have this divine kind of love has never entered into a personal, experiential knowledge of God. What he knows is in his head, but it has never gotten into his heart." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

GOD IS LOVE

"This is the most comprehensive and sublime of all the biblical affirmations of God's being."

-- John Stott

For (hoti) God (theos) is (present tense) **love (agape)** Practically speaking this teaches us that at the root of all God does is love! Always pay attention to this term of explanation and ask at least "What is the author explaining?" John is simply explaining that they do **not know God** experientially as evidenced by the fact that they have no power to manifest the quality of love which God is (See God's Attribute of Love). Stated another way, they don't know Him because they don't "look" like one of His children! There is no "family resemblance." **God is love** means that the very being of God is love.

God's love is: spontaneous in its source; universal in scope; long-suffering in intensity; self-sacrificing in character, aggressive in action; and constant in duration.

-- W Griffith-Thomas

A E Brooke - Love is not merely an attribute of God, it is His very Nature and Being; or rather, the word expresses the highest conception which we can form of that Nature. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

Since God is love one who does not love is not born of Him, because that is His nature.

God is love is not just a "quality" of God, but is the essence of Who God is forever and ever. Amen. There is an off-Broadway musical that has a song entitled "Our Love Is God." However that is **NOT** what the Bible teaches. You **cannot** reverse "**God is love**" and say "**Love is God**," for that would border on pantheism! In 1Jn 4:7+ the apostle says "**love is from God**" but that is not saying that "love is God." It would be like saying "light is God" (reversing "God is light")! Light is not God. Neither is love God.

'God is love' means not simply that love is one of his activities, but that all his activity is loving.

-- Stephen Smalley

Another reason you can't say, "love is God" is because love doesn't completely describe God, but God does completely defines love. He is love. His nature is loving, and love can never be absent from His being or any of His actions. Everything God does He does in love because He is love. He is the source and origin of love. The climatic demonstration of His love came when He sent His own Son to die for us on the cross. Love must have an object of its affection! How can one say he loves, when there is nothing to love, there must be an object of your love... You are the object of His love!!! (Brian Bell)

[Ray Stedman](#) on **God is love** - No matter how difficult it may appear to us, the fountain from which all God's activity stems is this kind of self-giving love. Even his judgments, his condemnations, arrive from love. We need to understand this. Judgment is not something separate from love. If you convince me that a holy, loving God cannot judge an evil being, then you will also convince me that he cannot love him. It is inherent in the quality of love to be antagonistic to that which opposes the thing loved. You see that in every mother. Attack a child with the mother present and see how that mother-love flames out in immediate resentment, opposition, and antagonism to all that threatens her loved one. God's love is the same. Inherent in it is the quality of judgment. God is a purifying fire, consuming and burning away the dross in order that he might preserve the gold. That, incidentally, is how the book of Hebrews describes him. "Our God is a consuming fire," (Hebrews 12:29). Love is not always easy to live with because of that very quality, yet it is the most attractive and wonderful thing in the world because of its warmth and its all-embracing inclusiveness that takes in all kinds and all conditions, without looking for merit on the part of the object loved. That is the love of God.

Bruce Barton - The next verses clarify the meaning of "**God is love**":

- God expressed his love in giving—he sent his only Son into the world (1Jn 4:9).
- God expressed his love in dying—he sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (1Jn 4:10).
- God expressed his love in forgiving—the atoning sacrifice removes sin so believers can have confidence on the Day of judgment (1Jn 4:17).
- God expressed his love in blessing—his love was made complete in his people (1Jn 4:12), he has given his people his Spirit (1Jn 4:13), and he removes his people's fears (1Jn 4:18). (See [1, 2, & 3 John - Page 93](#))

G S Barrett on **God is love** says these are "the greatest words ever spoken in human speech, the greatest words in the whole Bible.... It is impossible to suggest even in briefest outline all that these words contain, for no human and no created intellect has ever, or will ever, fathom their unfathomable meaning; but we may reverently say that this one sentence concerning God contains the key to all God's works and way ... the mystery of creation, ... redemption ... and the Being of God Himself. (Barrett, The First Epistle General of St. John, pp. 170–173.)

Love is a valid test of our fellowship and our sonship because "God is love."

Love is part of the very being and nature of God.

-- Warren Wiersbe

Stott adds "Not only is God the Source of all true love; He is love in His inmost being... It is the most comprehensive and sublime of all biblical affirmations about God's being, and is repeated here twice (1Jn 4:8, 16)." (Borrow [The Letters of John](#))

Whoever God indwells will reflect His character....

So whoever claims to know God personally, experientially

and yet does not love other believers is lying, whether to others or to himself or herself.

-- Gary Derickson

ESV Study Bible (borrow) - The person who lacks love shows himself to be unchanged at the core of his being by the gospel message. John is not saying that God is only love (he has numerous other attributes), nor that love is God (a statement for which there is no scriptural support). "God is love" means that God continually gives of himself to others and seeks their benefit. There was eternal love between the persons of the Trinity even before the world was created (John 17:24), and God's love is the ultimate source of any love that Christians are able to display (1 John 4:11, 12, 19).

Jackman on **God is love** - "John is not identifying a quality which God possesses; he is making a statement about the essence of God's being.

Gary Burge points out that "it is important to note what John is not saying. He is not saying that "God is loving" (though this is true). Nor is he saying that one of God's activities is "to love" us (though this is true as well). John is saying that God is love, that "all of his activity is loving." Love is the essence of his being. (See [The Letters of John - Page 186](#))

Marshall adds "'God is spirit' describes his metaphysical nature, while 'God is light' and 'God is love' deal with his character, especially as he has revealed himself to men."

Smalley - God is not only the source of love (v 7a), but love itself. Thus the assertion "God is love" means not simply that love is one of his activities, but that all his activity is loving

Dodd - Love so conceived is not to be understood as one of God's many activities but rather that "all His activity is loving activity. If He creates, He creates in love; if He rules, He rules in love; if He judges, He judges in love. All that He does is the expression of His nature, is—to love" ([The Johannine Epistles : C. H. Dodd](#))

*"If nothing were said in praise of love throughout the pages of this Epistle,
if nothing whatever throughout the pages of the Scriptures,
and this one thing only were all we were told by the voice of the Spirit of God,
For God is love; nothing more ought we require."*

-- Augustine

Hiebert explains that "Although John has just said that "love is of God" (1Jn 4:7), one cannot say that "love is God," just as one cannot say that "light is God." Without the article, "love" is qualitative, depicting the nature of His being. The fact that God as a person "is love" does not invalidate the fact that He is also holy and righteous. All aspects of His nature belong together and unite in determining His action and response. In His attitude and actions He is totally consistent. "Because He is love, God works against whatever works against love." ([1 John 4:7-21](#))

John is the apostle of three foundational statements about the nature of God - God is spirit (Jn 4:24). God is light (1Jn 1:5). God is love (1Jn 4:7+). Each gives us some small insight into the nature of our Transcendent God. Each of these attributes of God interacts with the other. For example, everything that God does is governed by His love because that is Who He is even when He is led to dispense judgment or wrath. Of these three aspects (Spirit, Light, Love), clearly love is easiest for us to identify with as it is the most personal and closest to our human experience.

Dodd on **God is love** - "All His activity is loving activity. If He creates, He creates in love; if He rules, He rules in live; if He judges, He judges in love. All that He does is the expression of His nature, is—to love." ([The Johannine Epistles : C. H. Dodd](#))

*Since His nature is love,
love is the test of the reality of our spiritual life.*

-- Warren Wiersbe

John Stott adds "Yet, if his judging is in love, his loving is also in justice. He who is love is light and fire as well. Far from condoning sin, his love has found a way to expose it (because he is light) and to consume it (because he is fire) without destroying the sinner, but rather saving him." (Borrow [The Letters of John](#))

I Howard Marshal adds that "**God is love**" is rightly recognized as one of the high peaks of divine revelation in this Epistle. Logically the statement stands parallel with '**God is light**' (1Jn 1:5+) and '**God is spirit**' (Jn. 4:24) as one of the three great Johannine expression of the nature of God... 'God is spirit' describes his metaphysical nature, while 'God is light' and 'God is love' deal with his character, especially as he has revealed himself to men."....Human love, however noble and however highly motivated, falls short if it refuses to include the Father and Son as the supreme objects of its affection (Borrow [The Epistles of John](#))

Adam Clarke - **God hates nothing He has made.** He cannot hate, because He is love. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends His rain on the just and the unjust. He has made no human being for perdition, nor ever rendered it impossible, by any necessitating decree, for a fallen soul to find mercy (cp 2Pe 3:9+, 1Ti 2:4). He has given the fullest proof of His love to the whole human race by the incarnation of His Son, Who tasted death for every man. How can a decree of absolute, unconditional reprobation, of the greater part or any part of the human race, stand in the presence of such a text as this?

C H Spurgeon - Never let it be thought that any sinner is beyond the reach of divine mercy so long as he is in the land of the living. I stand here to preach illimitable love, unbounded grace, to the vilest of the vile, to those who have nothing in them that can deserve consideration from God, men who ought to be swept into the bottomless pit at once if justice meted out to them their deserts. (Sermon [Love's Climax](#))

W. Hall Harris III on **God is love** - a quality of God's character is what is described here. But this is more than just another way of expressing "God loves" because, as C. H. Dodd has pointed out, all God's activity is loving activity, so that 'loving' is not just one more activity that God carries out like ruling or judging. Because this is so, because all God's activity is loving activity and involves the expression of love, the author can rightly conclude that the person who does not love must not know God. If they did, they would act in love, because all God's activity is loving activity. Once more, as so often in 1 John, **conduct** is the clue to **paternity**. ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 4:7-5:4a](#)) (Bolding added)

Warren Wiersbe - **God is spirit** as to His essence; He is not flesh and blood. To be sure, Jesus Christ now has a glorified body in heaven, and one day we shall have bodies like His body. But being by nature spirit, God is not limited by time and space the way His creatures are.

God is light. This refers to His holy nature. In the Bible, light is a symbol of holiness and darkness is a symbol of sin (Jn 3:18-21; 1Jn 1:5-10+). God cannot sin because He is holy. Because we have been born into His family, we have received His holy nature (1Pe 1:14-16+; 2Pe 1:4+).

*love does not define God,
but God defines love*

God is love. This does not mean that "love is God." And the fact that two people "love each other" does not mean that their love is necessarily holy. It has accurately been said that "love does not define God, but God defines love." **God is love and God is light; therefore, His love is a holy love, and His holiness is expressed in love. All that God does expresses all that God is. Even His judgments are measured out in love and mercy** (Lam 3:22-23). ([The Bible Exposition Commentary - recommended](#))

Steven Cole on the statement **God is love** - Almost everyone readily embraces that concept, but it is often misunderstood and taken to unbiblical extremes. Some misconstrue it to mean that because **God is love**, He overlooks or is tolerant toward sin. Some go so far as to say that because God is love, He could never condemn anyone to the eternal punishment of hell. But the Bible is clear that God's love does not negate His holiness and justice, or vice versa. In 1John 1:5+, the apostle stated, "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." John also has said, "He is righteous" (1Jn 2:29+). God's holiness and His love are both a part of His nature, and neither negates the other. In Revelation 20:15+, the apostle of love writes about the final and eternal condemnation of all whose names were not found written in the book of life, that they were thrown into the lake of fire. So John did not see any contradiction between the concept that "**God is love**" and the concept of His punishment of the wicked in hell. So while it is vital that we affirm, "**God is love**," it is also vital that we affirm, "God is holy," and, "God is the righteous judge." We also need to think biblically about the statement, "God is love." On the surface, it sounds simple, but when you begin to consider all that Scripture teaches on this, it gets rather difficult. D. A. Carson wrote a perceptive little book, [The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God - free download](#) pp. 16-19) that the Bible speaks about God's love in at least five different ways:

- (1) The peculiar love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father (John 3:35; 5:20; 14:31; 17:24).
- (2) God's providential love over all that he has made. He cares for all of His creation, so that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His permission.
- (3) God's salvific stance toward his fallen world. God so loved the world that he gave His Son (John 3:16). Carson argues (p. 17, correctly, I think), "On this axis, God's love for the world cannot be collapsed into his love for the elect."
- (4) God's particular, effective, selecting love toward his elect. Many passages in both the Old and New Testaments affirm this aspect of His love (Deut. 7:7-8; Ro 9:13+).
- (5) God's love is sometimes said to be directed toward his own people in a provisional or conditional way³ conditioned, that is, on obedience. Jesus tells us (John 14:21), "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

I might add that, perhaps another aspect of Christ's love was His special love for the apostle John, who refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23). Of course Jesus loved all of the disciples with a special love (John 13:1), but He loved John in a unique sense. Carson goes on (pp. 21-24) to point out that if we do not recognize these various aspects of God's love, and we make any one of them absolute, exclusive, or controlling all the others, we will get into difficulty. If all that we talk about is God's love for the whole world, we end up with a God so weak that He can't intervene to save us according to His sovereign purpose. On the other hand, if we only speak of God's love for His elect, we will not be able to offer the gospel freely to sinners. At the same time, Carson points out that we must not compartmentalize the various loves of God, as if they were each independent of the others. We must integrate these truths in biblical proportion and balance. And, he argues, we must be careful about various evangelical clichés. For example, to say that God's love is unconditional is true if you are referring to His elective love, but it is not true with regard to His disciplining love of His people. A sinning Christian needs to understand that he abides in God's love only when he obeys God. So, the seemingly simple statement, "**God is love**," is not quite so simple after all! But John wants us to know that the foundation for our love for one another is God, Who is the source of love and whose very nature is love. ([1 John 4:7-11 Why We Must Love](#))

*As a compass naturally points north,
a believer will naturally practice love because love is the nature of God.*

ILLUSTRATION - A navigator depends on a compass to help him determine his course. But why a compass? Because it shows him his directions. And why does the compass point north? Because it is so constituted that it responds to the magnetic field that is part of the earth's makeup. The compass is responsive to the nature of the earth. So with Christian love. The nature of God is love. And a person who knows God and has been born of God will respond to God's nature. As a compass naturally points north, a believer will naturally practice love because love is the nature of God. This love will not be a forced response; it will be a natural response. A believer's love for the brethren will be proof of his sonship and fellowship. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

ILLUSTRATION RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL - What God is determines what we ought to be. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). The fact that Christians love one another is evidence of their fellowship with God and their sonship from God, and it is also evidence that they know God. Their experience with God is not simply a once-for-all crisis; it is a daily experience of getting to know Him better and better. True theology (the study of God) is not a dry, impractical course in doctrine—it is an exciting day-by-day experience that makes us Christlike! A large quantity of radioactive material was stolen from a hospital. When the hospital administrator notified the police, he said: "Please warn the thief that he is carrying death with him, and that the radioactive material cannot be successfully hidden. As long as he has it in his possession, it is affecting him disastrously!" A person who claims he knows God and is in union with Him must be personally affected by this relationship. A Christian ought to become what God is, and "God is love." To argue otherwise is to prove that one does not really know God! ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

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

Agapao is love that is...

... empowered by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the surrendered saint (Gal 5:22⁺, cf Ro 5:5)

... commanded of Spirit filled husbands for their wives even as Jesus demonstrated for His bride, the church, giving Himself up for her (Ep 5:25⁺)

... to be given in the same way Spirit filled husbands love their own bodies (Ep 5:28⁺)

... the love with which the Father loved the Son and which may be in believers (Jn 17:26⁺)

... a debt we are to always seek to repay but can never fully discharge (Ro 13:8⁺)

... taught by God (1Th 4:9⁺)

... manifested by specific actions and attitudes (1Cor 13:4, 5, 6, 7, 8⁺)

... shown not just by words but by deeds (1Jn 3:17⁺, cf such love in action as a manifestation of genuine faith in James 2:15, 16⁺)

... manifested by keeping God's commandments (Jn 14:15, 21, 23, 24⁺)

... the response Jesus called for one to demonstrate to his or her enemies (Mt 5:44⁺)

... love calls for one to love one's neighbor as one's self (Mt 19:19⁺)

... love that seeks the recipient's highest good, not activated by virtue in the recipient (undeserved) (Jn 3:16⁺)

... love that finds its perfect expression in Jesus Christ and the Cross (Jn 3:16⁺, cp 1Jn 3:16⁺)

... the love of the overcomers in Revelation who did not love their life even to death (Re 12:10⁺)

... not based on affection, sentiment or emotion but upon a decision of the will

... given or offered even if the love is not received or reciprocated

... love differs from [phileo](#) which is based on affection

... love that cannot be manifested by unregenerate individuals in its true Biblical sense of being Spirit enabled. Agapao when used in the context of the unregenerate means generally to have a high esteem for or to take pleasure in something. This type of agapao love is based on one showing a high regard for the object's perceived value or importance

The first use of **agapao** in the LXX corresponds to the first mention of love in the Bible in the context of Abraham's call to sacrifice Isaac...

And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you **love** (LXX = agapao) , Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." (Genesis 22:2⁺)

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 is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved. While **agape** is not primarily a feeling, it is certainly not without feeling. It

might be called "caring commitment." While it is a command to love one another, and it is thus a "duty," it is also and predominantly a delight. Agape is an attitude manifest by actions, caring, committed actions. **Agape** often involves sacrifice, and is supremely exemplified by Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. 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)

Know (1097)(**ginosko**) refers to knowledge gained by experience, a knowing intimately and not just intellectually. For example, John uses **ginosko** to describe those who refused to believe in Jesus writing "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not **know** Him." (Jn 1:10+, see context Jn 1:11-13+) After most of the followers departed from Jesus in Jn 6:66+, Jesus confronted the twelve disciples asking "You do not want to go away also, do you?" (Jn 6:67+) to which Peter replied "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and **have come to know** (ginosko) that You are the Holy One of God." (Jn 6:68-69+) Notice that here John links believing in Jesus with knowing Him. And the greatest use of **ginosko** in the Bible (IMO) is John 17:3+ "This is eternal life, that they may **know** (ginosko) You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent." To **know** God and Jesus Christ is salvation, eternal life. On the other hand if Jesus does not **know** you, that means you are dead in your trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-3+) and will spend eternity away from His glorious present (2Th 1:9+). Jesus was crystal clear when He declared "I never (never ever - **oudepote**) **knew** (ginosko) you; **DEPART** (**present imperative**) FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS." (Mt 7:23+) Dear reader, I pray for your soul, that you never hear these words, thinking that you have made a profession of Jesus, but never truly experienced possession of Jesus. In His Name. Amen.

GINOSKO IN JOHN'S WRITINGS - Jn. 1:10 ; Jn. 1:48; Jn. 2:24; Jn. 2:25; Jn. 3:10; Jn. 4:1; Jn. 4:53; Jn. 5:6; Jn. 5:42; Jn. 6:15; Jn. 6:69; Jn. 7:17; Jn. 7:26; Jn. 7:27; Jn. 7:49; Jn. 7:51; Jn. 8:27; Jn. 8:28; Jn. 8:32; Jn. 8:43; Jn. 8:52; Jn. 8:55; Jn. 10:6; Jn. 10:14; Jn. 10:15; Jn. 10:27; Jn. 10:38; Jn. 11:57; Jn. 12:9; Jn. 12:16; Jn. 13:7; Jn. 13:12; Jn. 13:28; Jn. 13:35; Jn. 14:7; Jn. 14:9; Jn. 14:17; Jn. 14:20; Jn. 14:31; Jn. 15:18; Jn. 16:3; Jn. 16:19; Jn. 17:3; Jn. 17:7; Jn. 17:8; Jn. 17:23; Jn. 17:25; Jn. 19:4; Jn. 21:17; 1 Jn. 2:3; 1 Jn. 2:4; 1 Jn. 2:5; 1 Jn. 2:13; 1 Jn. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:18; 1 Jn. 2:29; 1 Jn. 3:1; 1 Jn. 3:6; 1 Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn. 3:20; 1 Jn. 3:24; 1 Jn. 4:2; 1 Jn. 4:6; 1 Jn. 4:7; 1 Jn. 4:8; 1 Jn. 4:13; 1 Jn. 4:16; 1 Jn. 5:2; 1 Jn. 5:20; 2 Jn. 1:1; Rev. 2:23; Rev. 2:24; Rev. 3:3; Rev. 3:9

God Is Love - A farmer placed a weather vane inscribed with the words "God is love" on top of his barn. One day a traveler stopped by the farm and watched the weather vane moving with the breeze. Then, with a smirk on his face, he asked, "Do you mean to say that your God is as changeable as the wind?"

The farmer shook his head and replied, "No. What I mean to say is that no matter which way the wind blows, God is love!"

The statement "God is love" implies much more than that God demonstrates His love regardless of the circumstances. It means that love is the essence of God's character. We will never be able to plumb the depths of His love—not even in eternity. But the apostle John pointed out that we can begin to understand it as we view the cross (1Jn. 4:9-10+). As we see Christ dying there for us, we catch a glimpse of the beauty of the loving heart of God.

John went on to point out that if God is love, His children should resemble Him (1Jn 4:11-21+). Consequently, if there is no warm glow in our hearts for our brother, if we do not thrill to the lovely name of Jesus, we may well question the reality of our conversion experience.

Do we know and reflect the love of God? By Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Unfailing is God's matchless love,
So kind, so pure, so true;
And those who draw upon that love
Show love in all they do.
—DJD

A person who knows God's love shows God's love.

Our Daily Bread - Deuteronomy 10:12-22 | Loved To Love - "A heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others." I saw this quotation, attributed to the Wizard of Oz, on a wall plaque in a gift shop.

The Wizard of Oz may be a good story, but it's not a reliable source of spiritual information. God said something quite different. According to Him, the greatest commandment is to love—to love Him first and then others (Mark 12:29-31). Scripture says nothing about expecting to be loved in return. In fact, Jesus stated the opposite in His most famous sermon: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11-12+).

When it comes to love, the important thing we need to know is this: All love starts with God (1 John 4:19+). As Moses told the Israelites, God delighted in them to love them (Deut. 10:15), and because of that they were to love others, even strangers (1Jn 4:19). God's intent is that the people who receive His love will become the conduit of His love to others.

Apart from God—who Himself is love—none of us could truly love or be loved (1John 4:7-8). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

"Love seeketh not her own," and so
He did not stay as God above,
But chose a manger and a cross
To show that He was Love.
—Wilmshurst

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. —1 John 4:8

1 John 4:7-11 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. —John 3:16

The words "For God so loved the world" are cherished by every believer. But without realizing it, their familiarity can dull our appreciation of their full meaning. I became aware of my own ingratitude one Christmas when I received a card that said, "God still loves the world!" That card has adorned my kitchen wall ever since. It reminds me that God's love is always and forever in the present tense.

John 3:16 also emphasizes that God's endless love for the world motivated Him to give His Son for its redemption. But what is meant by the word world? While God is concerned about our polluted planet, He is supremely concerned about the souls of those who inhabit it. Followers of Christ must love the world too. We must see it as a world of individuals who are lost and need to hear the gospel.

A mature Christian said to a young, enthusiastic believer, "You love to witness to people, don't you?" "Yes, I do," was the hasty reply. "But do you love the people you witness to?" he probed. He knew the possibility of witnessing to people without necessarily loving them as individuals.

Let's be careful we don't go through the motions without loving those we're talking to. Our witness will lack power without the force of God's love. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

To tell the lost about God's love
If we don't love them too
Is insincere and lacks the strength
Of words that should ring true.

—Sper

C H Spurgeon - "He that loveth not knoweth not God."—1 John 4:8 (Morning and Evening)

The distinguishing mark of a Christian is his confidence in the love of Christ, and the yielding of his affections to Christ in return. First, faith sets her seal upon the man by enabling the soul to say with the apostle, "Christ loved me and gave himself for me." Then love gives the countersign, and stamps upon the heart gratitude and love to Jesus in return. "We love him because he first loved us." In those grand old ages, which are the heroic period of the Christian religion, this double mark was clearly to be seen in all believers in Jesus; they were men who knew the love of Christ, and rested upon it as a man leaneth upon a staff whose trustiness he has tried. The love which they felt towards the Lord was not a quiet emotion which they hid within themselves in the secret chamber of their souls, and which they only spake of in their private assemblies when they met on the first day of the week, and sang hymns in honour of Christ Jesus the crucified, but it was a passion with them of such a vehement and all-consuming energy, that it was visible in all their actions, spoke in their common talk, and looked out of their eyes even in their commonest glances. Love to Jesus was a flame which fed upon the core and heart of their being; and, therefore, from its own force burned its way into the outer man, and shone there. Zeal for the glory of King Jesus was the seal and mark of all genuine Christians. Because of their dependence upon Christ's love they dared much, and because of their love to Christ they did much, and it is the same now. The children of God are ruled in their inmost powers by love—the love of Christ constraineth them; they rejoice that divine love is set upon them, they feel it shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them, and then by force of gratitude they love the Saviour with a pure heart, fervently. My reader, do you love him? Ere you sleep give an honest answer to a weighty question!

God Is Love

*"Weather vanes are changeable,
but God's love is constant."*

One day C. H. Spurgeon was walking through the English countryside with a friend. As they strolled along, the evangelist noticed a barn with a weather vane on its roof. At the top of the vane were these words: GOD IS LOVE. Spurgeon remarked to his companion that he thought this was a rather inappropriate place for such a message. "Weather vanes are changeable," he said, "but God's love is constant." "I don't agree with you about those words, Charles," replied his friend. "You misunderstood the meaning. That sign is indicating a truth: Regardless of which way the wind blows, God is love."

Fickle Love

A farmer printed on his weather vane the words "God is love." Someone asked him if he meant to imply that the love of God was as fickle as the wind. The farmer answered: "No, I mean that whichever way the wind blows, God is love. If it blows cold from the North, or biting from the East, God is still love just as much as when the warm South or gentle West winds refresh our fields and flocks. God is always love."

Love Dies to Self

Authors such as Dwight Small can wax eloquent about the application of agape love to marriage:

Agape is not born of a lover's need, nor does it have its source in the love object. Agape doesn't exist in order to get what it wants but empties itself to give what the other needs. Its motives rise wholly from within its own nature. Agape lives in order to die to self for the blessedness of caring for another, spending for another, spending itself for the sake of the beloved.

God is love, God is God Balancing Complexity and Simplicity in the Bible - John Piper ([A Godward Life](#))

One could easily dwell too long on the hard things in the Bible. They are there. Peter tells us so. He says that in Paul's letters "are some things hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). Some people are wired to see them. Others are wired to avoid them. The Bible is made for both types. How shall we say this in a balanced way that honors both?

Perhaps it would help to do it like this: Consider that "God is love," as it says in 1 John 4:8, and that God is God, as it says in Isaiah 46:9, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me." The truth that God is God implies that God is who he is in all his glorious attributes and self-sufficiency. But the truth that God is love implies that all of this glory is moving our way for our everlasting enjoyment.

Now, those two truths unleash very different impulses through the Bible. And we will see that a balance is introduced here lest we make of Christianity an elitist affair, which it definitely is not.

- That God is love unleashes the impulse of simplicity, and that God is God unleashes the impulse of complexity.
- That God is love unleashes the impulse of accessibility, and that God is God unleashes the impulse of profundity.
- That God is love encourages a focus on the basics, and that God is God encourages a focus on comprehensiveness. One says,

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). The other says, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, RSV).

- That God is love impels us to be sure that the truth gets to all people, and that God is God impels us to be sure that what gets to all people is the truth.
- That God is love unleashes the impulse toward fellowship, and that God is God unleashes the impulse toward scholarship.
- That God is love tends to create extroverts and evangelists, and that God is God tends to create introverts and mystics.
- That God is love helps foster a folk ethos, and that God is God helps foster a fine ethos.

One ethos revels in the intimacy of God and sings softly,

I love you, Lord
And for you I wait:
Your promises
And your power are great.
Make haste, my God,
May I taste your ways
I will magnify your sweet peace
All of my days.
(John Piper)

And the other ethos reveals in the transcendent majesty of God and sings with profound exultation,

Far, far above thy thought
His counsel shall appear,
When fully He the work hath wrought
That caused thy needless fear.
Leave to his sovereign will
To choose and to command:
With wonder filled, thou then shalt own
How wise, how strong His hand.
("Give to the Winds Thy Fears,"
Paul Gerhardt, 1653)

If any of you is saying to yourself, "I don't like this separation between God is love and God is God, between folk and fine, evangelists and mystics, fellowship and scholarship, accessibility and profundity, simplicity and complexity"—GOOD! Because, in my mind, every one of these things is precious, and both sides of all these pairs are indispensable in the ministry and mission of Christ in the world.

So my prayer is this. For believers, I pray that, seeing these different impulses in Christianity, you will embrace both of them. If you lean toward one side (as we all do), that you will be respectful and affirming to those toward the other side. And that you will cherish the fuller manifestation of God in his church and in the world.

And for those who may be reading this without love to Christ in your heart, my prayer is that what you have seen will help remove some caricatures or stereotypes of Christianity and the Bible—and open the way for you to see all that God is for you in Christ, so that you freely believe on him.

THE POWER TO LOVE BY THEODORE EPP

In Strength for the Journey

1 John 4:7-21

The apostle did not say, "Try to create and produce love." He said, "Let us love." In other words, we are to release that love.

Some may protest and say they cannot love certain people. That is true from the natural standpoint, but we are not dealing with natural love. It is divine love, the love with which God loved us when we were unlovable and our sins had separated us from Him.

God, as to His nature, is love. And this love is shared with the believer. It has been shed abroad in the heart of each one (see Rom. 5:5).

This love of God will grow within us and flow through us in an unbroken stream if we will let it. The Christian life, which is the power of the Holy Spirit within, is a life of love. This love of God matures the Christian.

I have seen many of God's people grow older in the Lord and grow more Christlike as they walked with Him from day to day. They took more time to be with the Lord and had their hearts filled with Him. Through this, their love was perfected toward others.

This mature love expressed through God's people demonstrates to others that Christ lives in us.

"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3).

D L Moody - God is Love.—1 John 4:8.

IF I could only make men understand the real meaning of the words of the Apostle John—"GOD IS LOVE."—I would take that single text, and would go up and down the world proclaiming this glorious truth. If you can convince a man that you love him you have won his heart. If we could really make people believe that God loves them, how we should find them crowding into the kingdom of heaven! The trouble is that men think God hates them; and so they are continually turning their backs on Him.

Love Hurts! - This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. —John 15:12

"Sometimes love sure hurts!" The mother and father were expressing the difficulties and heartaches of guiding their children through their teen years. "Maybe if we didn't love them quite so much it wouldn't be so hard," the husband added.

Even though love brings pain and sorrow, what would life be without it? In his book *The Four Loves*, C. S. Lewis wrote:

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness... The only place outside heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers ... of love is hell."

To love is to take risks, to expose our hearts. Sometimes it hurts! It hurt Christ, but He kept on loving, even at the cost of His life. He commanded us, "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 15:12).

We must keep loving that spouse, that teenager, that neighbor, that co-worker. It is Christlike—and it's better than locking your heart in a coffin of self-centeredness. By David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Over

How have you been hurt by those you've tried to love?

Have you been tempted to withhold your love?

How has someone shown patient love to you?

Nothing costs as much as loving except not loving.

Hymns Related to 1 John 4:8

- [Amid the Splendors of Thy State](#)
- [Close to My Door](#)
- [From All Who Dwell in Heav'n Above](#)
- [God Is Kind](#)
- [God Is Love!](#)
- [God Is Love \(Woodruff\)](#)
- [God, My Father, Hear Me Pray](#)
- [God's Heart Is Love](#)
- [Holy Jesus! God of Love!](#)
- [Love Is the Theme](#)
- [O God, Our Hearts Were Shattered](#)
- [There Is a Sound in Every Breeze](#)

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love 1 JOHN 4:8

No one but God could have revealed that to the world, for we all see nothing but its contradiction in our own limited experience. From shattered and broken lives, from caverns of despair where fiends rather than men seem to live, comes the apparent contradiction to any such statement. No wonder the carnal mind, the merely intellectually cultured, considers us foolish, mere dreamers talking of love when murder, war, famine, lust, pestilence, and selfish cruelty are abroad in the earth. Paul reminds us that those without the Spirit of God cannot understand the things of God "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit" (1 CORINTHIANS 2:14) But, oh, the beauty of the Abraham-like faith that dares to place the center of its life, confidence, action, and hope in an unseen and apparently unknown God. Such faith says, "God is love," in spite of all appearances to the contrary; it says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). Such faith is counted for righteousness. Look back over your own history, as revealed to you by grace, and you will see one central fact growing large—God is love. No matter how often your faith in such an announcement was clouded, no matter how often the pain and suffering of the moment made you speak carelessly, this statement has carried its own evidence most persistently—God is love. In the future, when trial and difficulties await you, do not be fearful. Whatever and whoever you may lose faith in, do not let this faith slip from you—God is love. Whisper it not only to your heart in its hour of darkness, but here in your corner of God's earth and man's great city. Live in the belief of it; preach it by your sweetened, disciplined, happy life; sing it in consecrated moments of peaceful joy; sing until the world around you is wrought to sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not. (percy bysshe shelley) The world does not encourage you to sing, but God does. Song is the sign of an unburdened heart; so sing your songs of love freely, rising ever higher and higher into a fuller understanding of the greatest, grandest fact on the stage of time—God is love

Love Revealed

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 1 John 4:9

Read: 1 John 4:9–16

When a series of pink "I love you" signs mysteriously appeared in the town of Welland, Ontario, local reporter Maryanne Firth decided to investigate. Her sleuthing turned up nothing. Weeks later, new signs appeared featuring the name of a local park along with a date and time.

Accompanied by a crowd of curious townspeople, Firth went to the park at the appointed time. There, she met a man wearing a suit who had cleverly concealed his face. Imagine her surprise when he handed her a bouquet and proposed marriage! The mystery man was Ryan St. Denis—her boyfriend. She happily accepted.

St. Denis's expression of love toward his fiancée may seem a bit over-the-top, but God's expression of love for us is nothing short of extravagant! "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

Jesus is not merely a token of love, like a rose passed from one person to another. He is the divine human who willingly gave up His life so that anyone who believes in Him for salvation can have an everlasting covenant relationship with God. Nothing can separate a Christian "from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39). —Jennifer Benson Schuldt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Dear God, thank You for showing me, in the greatest way possible, that You love me. Help my life to demonstrate my love for You. We know how much God loves us because He sent His Son to save us.

Insight - In today's reading the word for love is the Greek noun *agape*, which speaks of the highest form of love imaginable, a love that seeks the welfare of the other even at great personal cost. John reminds us that the ultimate evidence of God's love for us is seen in the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf (1 John 4:9). John then says that our response to God's love should be our self-sacrificing love for one another as fellow Christ-followers (v. 11). His application of God's love concludes with a reminder that our ability to love one another is dependent upon His love being revealed and "made complete in us" (v. 12). Our expression of the Father's love for us in our relationships will be a result of what the Holy Spirit is producing in our hearts.

To learn more about the love of God, take a look at the Discovery Series booklet *God Is Love: Reflections on the Character of God*

Puritan Daily Reading - Hard Thoughts of God

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

It is exceeding acceptable unto God, even our Father, that we should hold communion with Him in His love, that He may be received into our souls as one full of love, tenderness, and kindness towards us. Flesh and blood is apt to have very hard thoughts of Him, to think He is always angry, yea, implacable; that it is not for poor creatures to draw nigh to Him; that nothing in the world is more desirable than never to come into His presence, or, as they say where He has any thing to do. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" say the sinners in Zion

(Isa. 33:14). And, "I knew thou wast an austere man," says the evil servant in the gospels (Matt. 25:24). Now, there is not any thing more grievous to the Lord, nor more subservient to the design of Satan upon the soul, than such thoughts as these. Satan claps his hands when he can take up the soul with such thoughts of God: he has enough, all that he desires. This has been his design and way from the beginning. The first blood that murderer shed was by this means. He leads our first parents into hard thoughts of God: "Hath God said so? hath he threatened you with death? He knows well enough it will be better with you"; with this engine did he batter and overthrow all mankind in one; and being mindful of his ancient conquest, he readily uses the same weapons wherewith then he so successfully contended

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 |Loved To Love

"A heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others." I saw this quotation, attributed to the Wizard of Oz, on a wall plaque in a gift shop.

The Wizard of Oz may be a good story, but it's not a reliable source of spiritual information. God said something quite different. According to Him, the greatest commandment is to love—to love Him first and then others (Mark 12:29-31). Scripture says nothing about expecting to be loved in return. In fact, Jesus stated the opposite in His most famous sermon: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11-12).

When it comes to love, the important thing we need to know is this: All love starts with God (1 John 4:19). As Moses told the Israelites, God delighted in them to love them (Deut. 10:15), and because of that they were to love others, even strangers (v.19). God's intent is that the people who receive His love will become the conduit of His love to others.

Apart from God—who Himself is love—none of us could truly love or be loved (1 John 4:7-8).

"Love seeketh not her own," and so
He did not stay as God above,
But chose a manger and a cross
To show that He was Love. —Wilmshurst

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. —1 John 4:8

Know Love

The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)

No Love

Romantic love is a big deal in our culture. It's glamorized in the continual stream of romantic comedies in the theaters and the number of love songs in all genres of music. Unfortunately, an alarming number of men are looking for love in all the wrong places. According to numerous statistics available today, roughly half of Christian men have a problem with pornography.

Unlike what we were taught as boys, the opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is lust. Love is selfless, but lust is selfish. Love gives; lust takes. Love honors; lust degrades. By going down a path of pornography, many men are ruining their love lives.

The Greatest Love

God is serious about love. He wants us to know it, live it, and give it. As 1 John 4:8 says, "The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love." That really puts things in perspective.

Since God is love, He can't stand the opposite. We show love when we fight against lust. Lust is a powerful force, but the Bible is clear that love is greater. Instead of following a path of no love, we must know love and follow God. Through the power of God's love, we can break free of the trap of false love—which is really just sinful lust—and then give and receive the true love we were made to experience. So with God's help go for the real thing.

Bottom Line

If you have a problem with pornography, find help. Talk to someone. Do whatever you can to break the habit.

Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied.—Jude 2.

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.—1 John 4:8.

He rests in God and He in him, Who still abides in love; In love the saints and seraphim Obey and praise above; For God is love; the loveless heart Hath in His life and joy no part. C.F. GELLERT.

Divine love is perfect peace and joy, it is a freedom from all disquiet, it is all content and happiness; and makes everything to rejoice in itself, Love is the Christ of God; wherever it comes, it comes as the blessing and happiness of every natural life, a redeemer from all evil, a fulfiller of all righteousness, and a peace of God, which passeth all understanding. Through all the universe of things, nothing is uneasy, unsatisfied, or restless, but because it is not governed by love, or because its nature has not reached or attained the full birth of the spirit of love. For when that is done, every hunger is satisfied, and all complaining, murmuring, accusing, resenting, revenging, and striving, are as totally suppressed and overcome, as the coldness, thickness, and horror of darkness are suppressed and overcome by the breaking forth of the light. WILLIAM LAW.

Greg Laurie - GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE (See [Because... - Page 146](#))

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:8)

The Bible not only tells us that God is good; it tells us that God is love. He loves us. It is not merely that God has love or that He is loving. The Bible actually says that God is love.

Today we have a Hollywood version of love that is very shallow. It is probably closer to lust than anything else. Basically, the Hollywood version of love is one that says, "I love you as long as you are lovable." Or, "I love you as long as you are beautiful or handsome. But the moment you cease to interest me, I will trade you in on the new model. I will move on to another relationship."

In contrast, God's love is unchanging. It is consistent. It is inexhaustible. He always loves us. He loves us when we are sitting in church with smiles on our faces and a Bible in our laps, but He also loves us when we are failing and when we are sinning. Though God is displeased by our sin, He still loves us, no matter what we do. So we need to remember that about God.

But I want you to know something about sin: sin will cost you. Sin is very expensive. Many advertisements today will urge us to "Buy now, pay later." We love that, because it almost seems as though we're getting something free. But payday will come—with interest.

In the same way, the devil says, "Play now. You won't have to pay." But sin will always cost. Adam's sin cost him paradise. David's sin cost him his family and his reputation. Samson's sin ultimately cost him his life. What is your sin costing you?

God Is Love 1 John 4:8

"God is love." That is the greatest sentence that was ever written.... That sums up the whole contents of the Bible. If I were asked for a sentence to print in letters of gold on the outside of our Bible, a sentence that summed up the whole contents of the book, it would be this one, "God is Love." That is the subject of the first chapter of Genesis, it is the subject of the last chapter of Revelation, and it is the subject of every chapter that lies between.

The Bible is simply God's love story, the story of the love of a holy God to a sinful world. That is the most amazing thing in the Bible. People tell us the Bible is full of things that it is impossible to believe. I know of nothing else so impossible to believe as that a holy God should love a sinful world, and should love such individuals as you and me, as the Bible says He does. But as impossible as it is to believe, it is true. There is mighty power in that one short sentence, power to break the hardest heart, power to reach individual men and women who are sunk down in sin, and to lift them up until they are fit for a place beside the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Throne.... "God is Love." (R A Torrey)

GOD'S UNIQUE LOVE -- Lee Strobel - [The Case for Christ Daily Moment of Truth: Devotions to ... - Page 192](#)

God is love. 1 JOHN 4:8

IT SEEMS SO SIMPLE: GOD IS LOVE. THIS IS A THEOLOGICAL truth many of us have heard for most of our lives, so we mark it off of our checklist for Christian orthodoxy.

"Got it," we say, and we move on.

But did you know that most other worldviews and religions diminish or deny this idea? Atheism, of course, denies that God exists at

all, so there is nobody out there to love us. Eastern religions generally hold to a pantheistic view that says everything is part of an impersonal All. But when everything is god, you no longer have a personal God who can relate to us as people and certainly not One who can love us.

Even Islam, a religion that believes in one God, downplays the idea that God is love. The Qur'an does describe him a few times as being loving, but this is minimized by the fact that a number of other passages in the Qur'an "qualify Allah's love significantly," explains Christian philosopher David Wood. "While Allah is said to love those who do good deeds (2:195), those who are pure (2:222), those who are righteous (9:7), and those who fight in his cause (61:4), the Qur'an is equally clear that Allah has no love for transgressors (2:190), ungrateful sinners (2:276), the unjust (3:57), or the proud (4:36).

"Even more significantly," Wood continues, "the Qur'an states that Allah does not love non-Muslims: 'Say [O Muhammad]: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Say: Obey Allah and the Apostle; but if they turn back, then surely Allah does not love the unbelievers' (Qur'an 3:31–32)."¹

Muslim apologist Shabir Ally summarized it like this: "The proper response to God is to love Him, and in response God will love us as well."² But the apostle Paul said just the opposite: "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Once you see how many ways various belief systems around the world tend to minimize God's love, Christian truths about the God of Scripture jump out in stark and satisfying contrast.

Truth for Today

Try to push through the fog of the familiar to realize anew the uniqueness of the God of the Bible. He loves us. We matter so much that he sacrificed his Son to pay for our sins and to pave the way back to him. This is a God to be followed, worshiped, and, yes, loved in return.

Jerry Bridges - UNQUESTIONABLE LOVE

The LORD is ... kind in all his works. PSALM 145:17

The apostle John said, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This succinct statement, along with its parallel one, "God is light" (1 John 1:5; that is, God is holy), sums up the essential character of God, as revealed to us in the Scriptures. Just as it is impossible in the very nature of God for Him to be anything but perfectly holy, so it is impossible for Him to be anything but perfectly good.

Because God is love, an essential part of His nature is to do good and show mercy to His creatures. Psalm 145 speaks of His "abundant goodness," of His "abounding in steadfast love" and being "good to all," of how "his mercy is over all that he has made" (verses 7–9). Even in His role of Judge of rebellious men, He declares, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11, NIV).

When calamity after calamity seems to surge in upon us, we'll be tempted to doubt God's love. Not only do we struggle with our own doubts, but Satan seizes these occasions to whisper accusations against God: "If He loved you, He wouldn't have allowed this to happen." My own experience suggests that Satan attacks us far more in the area of God's love than either His sovereignty or His wisdom.

If we're to honor God by trusting Him, we must not allow such thoughts to lodge in our minds. As Philip Hughes said, "To question the goodness of God is, in essence, to imply that man is more concerned about goodness than is God.... To suggest that man is kinder than God is to subvert the very nature of God.... It is to deny God; and this is precisely the thrust of the temptation to question the goodness of God."⁹⁰ [Trusting God - Page 132](#)

H A Ironside - "God is love—1 John 4:8.

Love is the manifestation of the divine nature. God is love. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). As we walk in love we have fellowship with God. Observe, we are not told merely that God is loving. He is more than that Love is the essence of the divine Being. We are told that God is merciful, but we could not say that God is Mercy. We know that He is compassionate, but it would be absurd to say God is Compassion. So with many others of His attributes. But we are distinctly told that God is light (1 John 1:5), and God is love. Light and love tell us what He is in Himself. Light is, of course, a synonym for holiness. In the cross we see both light and love fully displayed. When our souls enter by faith into this, we receive the Holy Spirit, who is also the Spirit of love (2 Tim. 1:7). And so we delight to walk in holiness (Heb. 12:14) and in love. We manifest love for God by showing love to His people (1 John 4:20). We prove our love for Christ by obeying His commandments and keeping His words (John 14:15, 23).

"Come, let us all unite and sing—
God is love!
While heaven and earth their praises bring—
God is love!
Let every soul from sin awake,
Each in his heart sweet music make,
And sweetly sing for Jesu's sake—
God is love!
Oh, tell to earth's remotest bound—
God is love!
In Christ is full redemption found—
God is love!
His blood can cleanse our sins away;
His Spirit turns our night to day,
And leads our souls with joy to say—
God is love!
—Howard Kingsbury

Unexpected Kindness - Journey Day by Day (See [Journey Day by Day: Living Life Well - Page 117](#))

The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)

When Aaron and I were first married, I went out of my way to do things for him, even when he didn't ask me to. I wanted to be an excellent wife, and I enjoyed meeting his needs. But after a few months we began arguing about money. It was a constant source of friction between us.

Soon I began focusing on Aaron's faults instead of his strengths. Since I knew I was part of the problem, I asked God what I could do to improve our relationship. I needed help getting back on track with my attitude, so I purchased *The Love Dare* by Stephen and Alex Kendrick. I was a bit skeptical when I first got the book. I mean, how much can you really change a relationship in forty days? But the challenges required in this book were exactly what we needed.

On day two of *The Love Dare* my assignment was to show Aaron at least one unexpected act of kindness. That evening while we were watching TV, I quietly reached over and placed Aaron's feet in my lap. He seemed genuinely pleased that I initiated a foot massage. By taking the time to show him I cared, I opened the door a bit more to help our struggling relationship.

Showing kindness and love in our relationships takes consistent prayer and sacrifice. Sometimes we show more kindness toward strangers than we do to our own loved ones. But in Romans 12:10 we are reminded, "Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor." God wants us to show our love to one another through unselfish devotion. Once you let go of selfishness, you can be more in tune with the heart of God.

H A Ironside - Hosea 6:1–3

It is a great thing to realize that human sin and failure do not alter the love of God toward those who have offended Him so grievously. He loves us, not on account of anything meritorious that He sees in us, but simply because of what He is in Himself. "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). This is not what He does, but what He is. It is His very nature. And loving us, He has Himself provided a way for our forgiveness when we come to Him as needy sinners, and for our restoration when we fail, even after we have known His grace through salvation. We wrong Him if we doubt His love or if we give in to despair when our awakened consciences accuse us of base ingratitude and colossal iniquity in having offended against so holy a God and so loving a Savior.

God of the shadows, lead me through the gloaming,
Arch the long road with fretted vaults of green;
Send but a gleam to tell me I am homing,
Let not Thy face be seen.

Fold well Thy cloak of gentlest pity round me,
Keep Thy bright secrets till the morning break;
Why should I seek Thee, Lord, when Thou hast found me,
And know'st the way I take?

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. —1 John 4:8

The love of God is the hardest of all His attributes to speak about. You may not understand God's love for us. I don't know that I do myself. We are trying to comprehend the incomprehensible. It is like trying to take the ocean in your arms, or embrace the atmosphere, or rise to the stars. No one can do it, so I suppose I must do the best I can and trust the Holy Spirit to make up for human lack....

When it says, "God is love," it means that love is an essential attribute of God's being. It means that in God is the summation of all love, so that all love comes from God. And it means that God's love, we might say, conditions all of His other attributes, so that God can do nothing except He does it in love....

What we mean when we say, "God is love," is what we mean when we say of a man, "He is kindness itself." We don't mean that kindness and the man are equated and identical, but we mean the man is so kind that kindness is all over him and conditions everything he does. So when we say, "God is love," we mean that God's love is such that it permeates His essential being and conditions all that He does. Nothing God ever does, or ever did, or ever will do, is done separate from the love of God. AOGII182-183

Loving Father, I can't comprehend Your love, but I revel in it. I fall to my knees in worship. Amen.

Robert Neighbour - "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God it love." (1 John 4:8.)

Love heareth all, is kind,
'Twas born in heaven above,
Where all is perfect love;
By God it was designed,
Love!

Love sums up all that's good,
God's gift, His holy dove
Sent down from heaven above,
With faith, and hope, there stood
Love!

Where is there a sentence like this? "The greatest of these is love." Faith and hope are great; love is greater.

God is love, and whatsoever is born of God, bears the image of God and His love.

When we talk of "love," we are not speaking of a love which is born of the flesh. "Love is of God."

When the Lord said to Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these?" He used a Greek expression designating a divine and holy love. Peter answered, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." However, Peter used another word, which signifies filial love.

Love, as it is seen in God, cannot be divorced from the other inherent attributes of deity. God is love, and at the same time He is holy, righteous, just, and true. God's love does not make impossible His wrath; in fact, His love makes His wrath a necessity.

God's love to the sinner operates in conjunction with the satisfaction of God's justice against the sinner's sins. Love found a way in which God could be just, and also justify the guilty.

O holy love, and true!
In calm or stormy gale
Sing on, thou nightingale,
Thou dost my heart subdue:
Love!

O love! God's choicest flower,
Thy perfumes fill the air
With fragrance priceless, rare;
How wondrous is thy bower!
Love!

LOVING THE LORD by John Henry Jowett

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” 1 JOHN 4:8

The secret of life is to love the Lord our God and our neighbors as ourselves. But how are we to love the Lord? We cannot manufacture love. We cannot love to order. We cannot by an act of will command its appearing. No, not in these ways is love created. Love is not a work, it is a fruit. It grows in suitable soils, and it is our part to prepare the soils. When the conditions are congenial, love appears, just as the crocus and the snowdrop appear in the congenial air of the spring.

What, then, can we do? We can seek the Lord's society. We can think about Him. We can read about Him. We can fill our imaginations with the grace of His life and service. We can be much with Him, talking to Him in prayer, singing to Him in praise, telling Him our yearnings and confessing to Him our defeats. And love will be quietly born. For this is how love is born between heart and heart. Two people are “much together,” and love is born! And when we are much with the Lord, we are with One who already loves us with an everlasting love. We are with One who yearns because He first loved us. And when we truly love God, every other kind of holy love will follow. Given the fountain, the rivers are sure.

Bouquets of Hope - Karen Whiting (365 Devotionals for Hope)

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. —1 John 4:8

A child's fistful of weeds and a bouquet of long-stemmed roses have something in common. Both send a message of love and hope. The fragrance of roses may smell better than the more common scent of earthy weeds, but the love behind the weeds from a child is just as heartfelt as a gift someone bought at a florist. Both actions renew hope in your heart as someone has taken time to tell you that you are special. This love is how God wants us to relate to one another. Love is important to God because love is who God is. All of the characteristics of God grow out of His love, even His discipline. God expresses His love through discipline because He wants us to do well. If He did not care about you, then He would allow you to continue to make wrong choices.

The Bible reveals that a lack of love for others equals a lack of love for God. Therefore, show that you love God by loving others. Reach out and give someone a bouquet of flowers or some other gift. When given with love, a gift can touch someone's heart with hope.

Lord, thank You for special people in my life, people who care enough to shower me with smiles, little gifts, and words that show they care. Amen.

Warren Wiersbe - Back to (God's) Nature

Read 1 John 4:1–8

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:8

Love is a part of the very being and nature of God. If we are united to God through faith in Christ, we share His nature. And since His nature is love, love is the test of the reality of our spiritual lives.

A navigator depends on a compass to help him determine his course. But why a compass? Because it shows him the directions. And why does the compass point north? Because it is so constituted that it responds to the magnetic field that is part of the earth's makeup. The compass is responsive to the nature of the earth.

So it is with Christian love. The nature of God is love. And a person who knows God and has been born of God will respond to God's nature. As a compass naturally points north, a believer will naturally practice love, because love is the nature of God. This love will not be a forced response; it will be a natural response. A believer's love for the brethren will be proof of his sonship and fellowship.

Something to Ponder If God's complete love were indicated by due north on a compass, what direction would your own personal compass read? (How far off would you be from pointing north?)

Never question God's great love, for it is as unchangeable a part of God as is His holiness. No matter how terrible your sins, God loves you. Were it not for the love of God, none of us would ever have a chance in the future life. But God is love! And His love for us is everlasting!

—BILLY GRAHAM Peace with God

William MacDonald - “God is love.” 1 John 4:8

The coming of Christ brought a new word for love into the Greek language—agape. There was already a word for friendship (philia) and one for passionate love (eros), but there was none to express the kind of love which God showed in giving His only begotten Son and which He calls on His people to show to one another.

This is another-worldly love, a love with new dimensions. The love of God had no beginning and it can have no end. It is a love that has no limit, that can never be measured. It is absolutely pure, free from all taint of lust. It is sacrificial, never counting the cost. Love manifests itself in giving, for we read, “God so loved the world that He gave...” and “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us...” Love ceaselessly seeks the welfare of others. It goes out to the unlovely as well as to the lovely. It goes out to its enemies as well as to its friends. It is not drawn out by any worthiness or virtue in its objects but only by the goodness of the donor. It is utterly unselfish, never looking for anything in return and never exploiting others for personal advantages. It does not keep a count of wrongs, but throws a kindly veil over a multitude of slights and insults. Love repays every discourtesy with a kindness, and prays for its would-be murderers. Love always thinks of others, esteeming them better than self.

But love can be firm. God chastens those whom He loves. Love cannot countenance sin because sin is harmful and destructive, and love desires to protect its objects from harm and destruction.

The greatest manifestation of God’s love was the giving of His beloved Son to die for us on the Cross of Calvary.

Who Thy love, O God, can measure,
Love that crushed for us its Treasure,
Him in whom was all Thy pleasure,
Christ, Thy Son of love?

(Allaben)

GOD IS LOVE

God is love. 1 John 4:8

God doesn’t just have love, He is love. And what He is, He does. God loves you, and God loves me. Because He loved us first, we love Him. Grow Your Faith Sometimes people are so identified with a quality or activity that they come to represent it. Like saying, “This one teacher wasn’t just a good part of that school for me, she was that school for me.” God is love, so what’s one way you can express that love to someone today? Grow Your Child’s Faith God is love. That means everything He does is loving. If someone is mean to Him, His answer is love. If someone is lonely, His answer is love. If someone makes a terrible choice, His answer is love. If you ever worry you’ve made God mad, remember He is love, and His answer to you is always going to come from what He is. Dear Father, the idea that You are love is the most amazing and important thing I have ever learned. Show me how to live like I know You are love. Amen.

GOD’S RICH LOVE

WHOEVER DOES NOT LOVE DOES NOT KNOW GOD, BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE.—1 John 4:8

You couldn’t have asked for a better place to live or for a more perfect spouse. In fact, in this place, intimacy with others and God was deep and pleasurable. It was Eden. A garden where God’s best was provided for the lives of Adam and Eve.

Yet, even there, sin and selfishness rose to interrupt the experience.

In the midst of a loss of intimacy and the arrival of aloneness, it is significant to note that God took the initiative toward Adam and Eve and walked back into the Garden of Eden after the Fall. If we didn’t know the story and tried to imagine what might happen next, we might have imagined God’s exercising a host of options. He could have annihilated everything and started over again. He could have ignored Adam and Eve and let them live with the consequences of rejecting Him, allowing their new scheme of existence to run its degenerative course. Or He could do the unexpected. He could restore the relationship they had so carelessly given up. He could call them back to Himself and to a consistent moral order that would again make possible intimacy with Him and the development of trusted relationships.

And that is just what He did. It is all the more surprising when we realize that God is the only entity in the universe that can be alone and still be fully satisfied and sustained. It may come as a blow to us that God does not need us! But the beauty of it is that, though He can go for eternity without us, He chooses to love us and care for us, which makes His love and concern for us richer still. He doesn’t love us for what it will do for Him. Too many of us have been wounded by that kind of love. He loves us because He is love itself and because He created us for the pleasure of our fellowship and the ultimate glory of His name. It was that kind of love and

compassion that drove Him to seek to reconnect Adam and Eve to Himself. He offers the same privilege to us today.

Have you accepted God's invitation to intimate fellowship?

More Than Luv

Love should cast out terror, but not awe. True love must include awe. This is one of the great truths about sex and marriage that our age has tragically forgotten....

God is love. But love is not love. Love is a fire, storm, earthquake, volcano, lightning and hurricane. Love banged out the Big Bang and endured the hell of the cross. ...

Next time you hear "All you need is luv," think of the captain of the Titanic singing it to his passengers. As for me, I'd rather have a lifeboat.

James Smith - THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOVE 1 John 4:8, 9, 17; 2:5

- I. The Essence of His Love—God Himself—"God is Love" (4:8).
- II. The Cause of His Love—not in us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (4:10).
- III. The Activity of His Love—Sending His Son to die for us (4:8, 9).
- IV. The Manner of His Love. The outcome of that love is our adoption as children (3:1, 2).
- V. The Perfecting of His Love. That is, the increasing discovery on our part of the assurance and perfection of His love. This gives us boldness (4:17).
- VI. The Maturing of His Love. That is, what we must do in order to liberate the love of God shed abroad in our hearts and lives in holy action (2:5).

LOVE 1 John 4:7–9, 11

- I. Love's Home.
 - 1. "Love is of God" (4:7).
 - 2. Love is God, or better: "God is Love" (4:8).
- II. Love's Apprehension. "We have known and believed the love" (4:16). Knowledge following faith.
- III. Love's Manifestation. The proof of God's love was the sending of His Son (4:9).
- IV. Love's Overflowing. Leads us to love one another (4:7, 11). Surely 4:7 teaches that there is no Divine love in the heart of any unregenerate person. Divine love is a far higher thing than mere natural affection.

Who can measure the depths of this love in allowing His "Only Beloved" to be identified with human sin and guilt (John 3:16).

John MacArthur - GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." 1 JOHN 4:8 (See [Strength for Today: Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith - Page 17](#))

God's love is unconditional and righteous.

We hear a lot today about love from books, magazines, TV, and movies. If you didn't know any better, you'd think that our society is the most loving on earth. Much of the "love," though, is nothing more than lust masquerading as love, or selfishness disguised as kindness. But today's verse tells us that "God is love"; the character of God defines love. To clear up any confusion about love, we need only to look at who God is. And then, of course, we need to seek to love others as God loves us.

First, God's love is unconditional and unrequited. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God loved us when we were sinners, when we had no righteousness and we didn't—and couldn't—love Him back. God doesn't love us because we deserve it or because we love Him, but because it's His nature to love.

God's love doesn't mean He winks at sin, though. Just as earthly fathers discipline sinning children, "those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Heb. 12:6). True love doesn't indulge unrighteousness, it confronts it. This kind of tough love isn't always fun, but it's for the best: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (v. 11).

We'll study God's love more in the next lesson, but now it's only natural to examine how we ourselves are doing in demonstrating love. Is our love unconditional, or do we withhold love from those who hurt us? Do we love only those who love us back? Jesus says, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them" (Luke 6:32). Loving those who love us is easy. Christ loved those at enmity with Him, and He expects us to love our enemies too.



Suggestions for Prayer: Thank God for His great love toward us and for its greatest manifestation in the Person of Christ.

For Further Study: First John has much to say about God's love for us and our love for Him and others. Read the entire book, noting each instance of the word love.

David Jeremiah - LOVED! 1 JOHN 4:8 God is love. (See [Sanctuary: Finding Moments of Refuge in the Presence of God](#))

When Scottish teenager George Matheson learned he was losing his eyesight, he determined to finish his studies at the University of Glasgow as quickly as possible. His blindness overtook him while he pursued graduate studies for Christian ministry, but his family rallied to his side. His sisters even learned Greek and Hebrew to help him in his assignments.

The real blow came later, when his fiancée determined she just couldn't marry a blind man. Breaking the engagement, she returned his ring. George was devastated. Years later when he was a beloved pastor in Scotland, his sister became engaged, and the news opened old wounds in his heart. More mature now, he turned to God and out of the experience wrote a prayer that later became a much-loved hymn. The words say:

O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thing ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

([PLAY THIS BEAUTIFUL VOCAL VERSION](#))

Have you been disappointed recently? God's love will never let you go, and in its continuous, compassionate, costly flow, your life will richer, fuller be.

A Gust of Praise Rob Morgan - Borrow [From this verse](#)

Medical technology has largely robbed us of the victorious deathbed scenes that end the biographies of many heroes of the Christian past. When the end comes now, we're often isolated, sedated, and connected to machines.

Not so John Fletcher, Wesley's associate. On Sunday, August 7, 1785, he began his sermon at church, but his countenance grew drawn and weak, his voice faltered, and he nearly fainted. Distressed murmurs ran through the congregation, and his wife Polly rushed to his side to dissuade him from continuing. But Fletcher sensed this was his last sermon, and he continued, mustering strength to discourse on the love and mercy of God. Afterward, he was helped home and took to his bed, "never again to walk in this world." He slept much after that, but during his lucid moments, Polly read and prayed with him.

She later wrote: On Wednesday, he told me he had received such a manifestation of the full meaning of those words, "God is love," as he could never be able to express. "It fills my heart," said he, "every moment. O Polly, God is love! Shout, shout aloud! I want a gust to go to the ends of the earth."

He then told her that, should speech fail, he would tap her twice with his finger to signify their testimony to each other of God's love.

The next day, his speech became befuddled, and Polly leaned over and whispered, "God is love." Instantly, as if all his powers were awakened, he broke out in a rapture. "God is love! love! love! O for that gust of praise!"

Polly remained by his side. He was hardly able to utter another word, but he kept tapping her with his finger. At last his lips moved again, and she heard him pray, "Head of the Church, be head of my wife!"

He sank quickly after that, yet frequently tapping Polly according to their sign, until "his precious soul entered into the joy of the Lord, without one struggle or groan, in the fifty-sixth year of his age."

1 John 4:7-12 TODAY IN THE WORD

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. - Romans 5:8

A missionary was picking up a package in a foreign post office. When the official recognized her as a missionary, the woman became a little anxious, not knowing if that would help or hinder matters. But to her surprise, the official began recounting all the good things that she and her coworkers had done for the local church and the townspeople. Finally, the official exclaimed: "You love

our people!" Then, to her greater surprise, he waived the tax on her package!

The centrality of love for believers can't be overemphasized; perhaps that's why the command to love one another appears for the third time in today's passage from 1 John (cf. 2:7–11; 3:11–18). Here, the command is linked to the very nature of God Himself.

We can think about this in the following way: think of an individual who loves you. You may say that this person is loving, but that is not the same as saying that this person is love! God alone is the origin of love, and because we have been born from Him, we are able to love one another (v. 7).

Although the claim that God is love is quite simple, we must think about love in biblical terms, because we use the verb love rather inconsistently! We can say that we love ice cream, and then say that we love our children. But biblical love is all about unconditional giving as exemplified in Jesus Christ. This love doesn't even consider what it might get in return—it simply loves the other person.

Additionally, love is understood by what God does in history. This is best seen in the love of the Father that gave His only Son, Jesus Christ (vv. 9–10).

APPLY THE WORD The Christian perspective on love is unique among world religions. Although many groups advocate love generally, only God shows love lived out in the person of Christ.

Octavius Winslow Daily Walking with God

"God is love." 1 John 4:8

God in Christ is no longer a "consuming fire," but a God of love, of peace; a reconciled God. God in Christ holds out His hand all the day long to poor sinners. He receives all; He welcomes all; He rejects, He refuses, He casts out none. It is His glory to pardon a sinner. It is the glory of His power, it is the glory of His love, it is the glory of His wisdom, it is the glory of His grace, to take the prey from the mighty, to deliver the lawful captive, to pluck the brand from the burning, to lower the golden chain of His mercy to the greatest depth of human wretchedness and guilt, to lift the needy and place him among the princes.

Behold Christ upon that cross! Every pang that He endures, every stroke that He receives, every groan that He utters, every drop of blood that He sheds, proclaims that God is love, and that He stands pledged and is ready to pardon the vilest of the vile. Justice, sheathing its sword, and retiring satisfied from the scene, leaves Mercy gloriously triumphant. And "God delights in mercy."

Having at such an infinite cost opened a channel; even through the smitten heart of His beloved Son; through which His mercy may flow boundless and free, venture near, nothing doubting. No feature of your case is discouraging, or can possibly arrest the pardon. Your age, your protracted rebellion against God, your long life of indifference to the concerns of your soul, the turpitude and number of your sins, your lack of deep convictions or of stronger faith, nor worth or worthiness to recommend you to His favor; are no true impediments to your approach, are no pleas why you should not draw near and touch the outstretched scepter, bathe in the open fountain, put on the spotless robe, welcome the gracious pardon, and press it with gratitude and transport to your adoring heart.

In the light of this truth, cultivate loving and kindly views of God. Ever view Him, ever approach Him, and ever transact your soul's affairs with Him, in and through Jesus. He is the one Mediator between God and your soul. God your Father may now be leading you through deep and dark waters. His voice may sound roughly to you. His dim outline is, perhaps, all that you can see of Him. His face seems veiled and averted; yet deal with Him now in Christ, and all your hard thoughts, trembling fears, and unbelieving doubts shall vanish.

In Jesus every perfection of God dissolves into grace and love. With your eye upon the cross, and looking at God through that cross, all the dark letters of His providence will in a moment become radiant with light and glory. That God, who has so revealed Himself in Jesus, must be love, all love, and nothing but love, even in the most dark, painful, and afflictive dealings with His beloved people! -

Ray Stedman - 1 John 4:7-10 God Is Love

Here we come face to face with that tremendous declaration of the Scriptures: "God is love." It means that at the root all God does is love. No matter how difficult it may appear to us, the fountain from which all God's activity stems is this kind of self-giving love. Even His judgments, His condemnations, arrive from love. Judgment is not something separate from love. If you convince me that a holy, loving God cannot judge a sinful person, then you will also convince me that He cannot love a sinful person. Inherent in the quality of love is an antagonism toward anything that opposes the object of love. Also, inherent in it is the quality of judgment. God is a purifying fire, consuming and burning away the dross in order that He might preserve the gold. That, incidentally, is how the book of Hebrews describes Him. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). Love is not always easy to live with because of that very quality, yet it is the most wonderful thing in the world because of its warmth and its all-embracing inclusiveness that takes in all kinds and all conditions, without looking for merit on the part of the object loved. That is the love of God.

Dr. H. A. Ironside used to tell of a woman who came to him and said, "I don't have any use for the Bible and for all this Christian superstition. It's enough for me to know that God is love."

He said to her, "Well, do you know that?"

She said, "Of course I know that, I've known it all my life."

"Well," he said, "do you think that everyone knows that?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "everyone knows God is love."

"Well," he said, "do you think that woman over in India, who is persuaded by her religion to take her little child and throw it into the river as an offering to the crocodiles, has any concept or idea that God is love?"

She said, "Well, no, but that's mere superstition."

"Do you think that the person in Africa, bowing down to his idols of wood and stone, trembling with fear lest they should strike back at him and destroy his crops and take away his children and even injure his own person, do you think he has any idea that God is love?" he asked.

She said, "No, but in every civilized country we know that God is love."

"Well," he said, "how do we know that? How do we know that God is love? Do the ancients teach this? Do the other religions of earth teach and show that God is love? Do you know that the only reason we know that God is love is because He sent His Son and manifested Himself as love? The book that tells about the Lord Jesus Christ is the only book in the world that contains the idea that the God behind all created matter is a God of love. Creation reveals His power, His greatness, and His might, but there is nothing in nature that says, 'God is love.' The only way we know this is that God manifested His love in the giving of His Son,"

Father, You alone are the source of this love, the only kind that meets the claimant hunger of the heart. I pray that I may recognize myself as called to this great task of being a demonstration of this kind of love.

Life Application: God showed His love by sending His Son that we might live through Him. Have we learned to recognize the true nature of Love as evidenced in all of God's actions?

Ian Paisley - Consuming Fire and Consuming Love

When I open this Book I find out that God is a consuming fire. When I read on in this Book I find out that God is love. That seems to be a terrible contradiction, does it not? God—a consuming fire, God absolute unlimited, everlasting love!

If you are in Christ you will know the answer, for in Christ God is love. Outside Christ He is a consuming fire. That is the very heart of the Gospel. Oh, let me say to you that our God is love in Jesus Christ. There is nothing more wonderful, more majestic and more glorious than John's Gospel chapter three and verse 16, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'

God is love! The Great, the Terrible, the Majestic God of Heaven loves men, loves women, loves boys and girls, loves the world. That means that He loves you.

Getting the Love Message Across

Mr. Moody said, 'I want people when they come to my Tabernacle in Chicago to remember that God is love.' So he put a sign above the pulpit, 'God is love.'

He lit it up with gaslights. One night an old drunkard came in and he thought there was a fire, and he said, 'There is a fire behind the pulpit.' A man touched him on the shoulder and said, 'If you were not drunk you could read what the fire says.' The man turned round in his stupor and said, 'Well what does the fire say?'

It says, 'God is love.' The man staggered out and down the sidewalk but he could not get away from it, 'God is love.' He went back to his bottle but he could not get away from it, 'God is love.' He went back to the den where he slept. He lay down but he could not get away from it, it was burning into his heart, 'God is love.' And Mr. Moody records that God put out His great arms of love and He picked up that poor drunken man, clasped him to His bosom, brought him to the Cross, washed him in His Son's crimson blood, and put the Holy Ghost in his heart.

When the man came back to the Church he was stone sober and he was able to read the text for himself. His testimony was this, 'It is true! It is true! It is true! God is love.'

WINDS OF LOVE ... God is love. 1 John 4:8

A certain man had a weather vane erected on his barn, on which appeared the text, "God is love." A friend passing by, thinking that it was a rather strange place for such a Scripture, asked about it. The farmer informed him, "This is just to re-mind me that no matter which way the wind blows, God is love." Yes, trusting child of God, it's true — no matter what your circumstance, how difficult the road, or how dark the hour of trial — whichever way the winds of life may be blowing, God is love!

When the warm "south wind" with its soothing and balmy breezes brings showers of blessing, "God is love." For "every good gift and

every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

When the cold "north wind" of trial and testing sweeps down upon you, "God is love." We know that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

When the "west wind" breathes hard upon you with its punishing intent, "God is love." For "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6).

When the "east wind" threatens to sweep away all that you have, "God is love." For despite appearances, He "shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). He knows when some things should be taken away, and in grace He removes them. Yes, "no matter which way the wind blows," God is love!

Perhaps, Christian friend, you are discouraged and down-hearted; if so, remember, God still cares for you. That which you are experiencing has either been sent or allowed by Him for your own good. (See Hebrews 12:11.)

God is love; His mercy brightens
All the path in which we rove;
Bliss He wakens, and woe He lightens,
God is wisdom, God is love.
— J. Bowring

*No affliction would trouble the child of God
if he knew the Lord's blessed reason for sending it.*

God is Love! James Smith, 1860

Right views of God are of the greatest importance. Fallen man cannot learn what God is from nature — let him study it ever so closely; nor from providence — let him observe it ever so accurately. Clear, correct, and full views of God's character, can only be learned from the Bible.

In the plan of salvation, God has given a full revelation of himself. Here he has displayed his justice equally with his grace — and his holiness equally with his mercy. In Jesus — the mirror that reveals God to believers — he is love — pure, perfect, perpetual love. Therefore twice in one chapter, the Apostle John declares, "God is Love." 1 John 4:8, 16.

God is essentially and eternally love — but to sinners he has manifested his love in a righteous and sovereign manner; not more sovereignly, than righteously — nor more righteously, than sovereignly. And each of the Divine persons in Jehovah — Father, Son, and Spirit — is alike, love, and has manifested their love to us.

The Father is love to us, and has wondrously revealed and displayed his love. In his love, he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love. Of his love, he gave his only begotten Son for us, to be a sacrifice for our sins; and he gave him to us, to be the perfect Savior of our souls. In his love — he gave us the many, exceeding great, and very precious promises. And, of his love he prepared for us a kingdom, before the foundation of the world.

All the arrangements of the eternal council,
all the provisions of the everlasting covenant,
all the gifts of grace, and all the preparations of glory —
are but fruits and effects, of the Father's infinite and eternal love.

If, therefore, the Father has thus thought of us, provided for us, and prepared to have us in his presence and glory forever — he must be love, and love to us!

The Son of God is love to us, and has manifested his love, by becoming incarnate for us; taking our nature, that he might personally know all our infirmities, temptations, and trials. In our nature he wrought for us, and produced a righteousness to justify us! He suffered for us, and died in our stead — to make an atonement for our sins. He ascended to Heaven to carry on our cause, and ever lives to answer every accuser, and by his intercession to secure for us every blessing. Could he do more, to prove his love? Or could he more clearly manifest, that he is love?

The Holy Spirit is love to us, and therefore he quickened us when dead in trespasses and sins. Having convinced us of sin, and of our need of a Savior — he led us to Jesus. He gave us the Holy Scriptures, and daily teaches us by his providence and grace. He helps our infirmities in prayer, and instructs us how, and what to pray for. He dwells in us, works in us, and exerts his power in us. He makes us his temple, and consecrates us to the glory of God. Could he more strikingly or impressively, prove that he is love — or

could he possibly show greater love to us?

Jehovah God — Father, Son, and Spirit — is love to the believer. Each of the Divine persons distinctly, and the whole God-head, unitedly — is love to the Christian. God is always, everywhere, and under all circumstances — love to his people. His nature being love — and his love being his nature — it cannot change — but is without variableness, or shadow of turning. Everything God does for us — he does out of love. And everything God permits to happen to us — he permits in love. Let us then endeavor always to keep in mind, that God is love. But more especially let us do so, in times of trouble and trial — for every trouble however heavy, and every trial, however severe — flows from his love.

So also when we approach to God in prayer, let us bear in mind, that we are not coming to a severe Judge, or an offended Governor — but to a loving Father — to a God who is love, and who loves to hear, answer, and confer blessings upon his children.

And when we lie on the bed of sickness, when death stands by our pillow, when the scenes of time are closing upon us, and the solemnities of eternity, are opening before us, when heart and flesh are failing, and Satan makes his last attack upon us — then, then let us remember, that God is love, and that his love is about to be perfected in us!

Lost sinner, a God of love, warns you to flee from eternal wrath, invites you to come to Jesus, and offers you everlasting life!

Horatius Bonar - THE MANIFESTED LOVE

‘In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.’—1 JOHN 4:9.

IT is of love that the apostle writes: first, human love, the love of man to man (ver. 7); and then of the love of God. Love has a heavenly origin; its birthplace is the bosom of God. And every one who knows love knows something that is truly divine: ‘Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.’ The absence of love from a heart is one of the worst and darkest signs. A heart that has shut out love is a heart that has shut out God. ‘He that loveth not knoweth not God, for GOD IS LOVE.’ O profound and wondrous truth, GOD IS LOVE! Is not this simple statement like light from the heaven of heavens? What more fitted to gladden, to soothe, to cure, and to sustain the heart of humanity, than such a revelation of God? What more fitted to scatter earth’s shadows, and to brighten its whole wide compass into the sunshine of a true and joyous day?

I. The love of God.—Of this love the Bible is the great witness. Paganism knew nothing of it. A God of love and a religion of love were strange things to a heathen. ‘God is love’ was a new idea to them,—one too high for them,—almost incomprehensible in its vastness and glory. God LOVES; God loves man the sinner; God loves man with a true and holy love; God loves the unlovable; God loves on and on, through years of resistance and hatred,—nay, God is love. These are truths which contain in them light for the human heart,—a heart hardened and contracted by selfishness and hatred. The dimensions of this love are beyond measure; and it is as free as it is large. It is love for the hateful; love whose patience, tenderness, and gentleness are inexhaustible; love beyond that of father and mother, brother or sister, yet combining in itself all these kinds of love; for the infinite heart out of which it flows is not only the fountainhead of these, but the model according to which they are fashioned. Are we fathers or mothers?—He much more. Have we the deep, tender feelings of father or mother?—He much more. No parent’s heart ever beat like His. No parent’s affection was ever more than a mere drop of the ocean when compared with His. Let us learn the love of God,—pure and spontaneous; not waiting for our love, but gushing out with a fulness of which we can form no conception. The love of God is like Himself, boundless,—stretching out its all-embracing arms and all-beseeching hands to the sons of men. O love of God! O love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—how great and true, how precious and peace-giving to the weary soul art thou! There is no joy like thine. There is no strength, no health, no liberty like that which thou infusest when thou art shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. ‘We have known and believed the love which God hath to us;’ this is our rejoicing. We have no good thing to say for ourselves; no boast to make; no goodness; no worth. All we can say is that ‘we have known and believed the love which God hath to us.’ This is the only account which we can give of ourselves or of our wondrous change.

II. The manifestation of God’s love.—This love of God has not been silent. It has spoken out. God is not dumb concerning Himself. This love of God has not been hidden under a bushel or set on some inaccessible mountain. It is visible to all, near to all, within the reach of all. It is not wrapt in clouds, nor darkly and dimly made known, nor whispered or muttered; it is announced with a clearness and loudness that make all earth and heaven to ring again. The manifestation of the love was the sending of His only-begotten Son into the world; for God so loved the world, that He gave His Son! It is not, then, of hidden but of manifested love that the Bible speaks; love so fully disclosed, so unambiguously expressed, so solemnly pledged, that disbelief of it seems an impossibility. ‘Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.’ Greater love could not be. A fuller revelation of it could not be. He gave His unspeakable gift: He spared not His Son, but delivered Him up for us all. This marvellous manifestation meets all our difficulties, and silences all our doubts. Shall any sinner upon earth, the vilest, say, ‘That love does not suit my case; there is not enough of it for me;’ or, ‘What security have for its perpetuity?’ God gave His Son to show His love to us; God laid our sins upon His Son to show His love; God made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, to show His love; God delivered

Him to die and be buried for us, to show His love. Was not this manifested love? Was not this love which could not be mistaken? It was not love created by the expiation of the cross. The love produced the expiation, not the expiation the love. The cross is the display of divine love in its fulness. It is the cross that preaches pre-eminently to us the grace of God, and proclaims in all its largeness and sufficiency the love of God. God's answer to every doubt or suspicion of the sinner or the saint is, 'Have I not given my Son?' If men will not read love in this gift, they will read it in nothing else. Here, if anywhere, we hear the message, 'God is love;' for here we learn that 'the Father sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'

III. The purpose of this manifested love.—'That we might live through Him.' Without Him death was our portion. Even this great love of God could not reach us without the death of His Son. The love sought life for us, but could only obtain it for us by sacrificing the Son. He has come, and lived, and loved, and died! All that fastened us to death has been unloosed. All that made life impossible has been taken out of the way. There is life to us through Him who died. God's love has found a way for itself to us; it is now free to bless; it can go forth unhindered to the sons of men; for it is love which magnifies righteousness. It has triumphed over human guilt, and brought pardon to the worst of sinners. He who receives God's testimony to the cross gets forthwith all the pardon and all the love which the cross reveals.

THE GREATEST SENTENCE THAT WAS EVER WRITTEN "God is Love."—1 John 4:8.

R A Torrey (from Revival Addresses)

My subject is the greatest sentence that was ever written. Of course, that sentence is in the Bible. All the greatest sentences are in the one Book. The Bible has a way of putting more in a single sentence than other writers can put in a whole book. Yet there are some who would tell us that the Bible is no more God's Book than other books. Either they have not read the Bible, or they have read it with their eyes closed.

This sentence has in it but three words. Each word is a monosyllable. One word has four letters, one three, and one only two; yet these nine letters, forming three monosyllables, contain so much of truth that the world has been pondering it for eighteen centuries, and has not got to the bottom of it yet. Whole volumes are dedicated to the exposition of this wonderful sentence—thousands of volumes.

1 John 4:8, "God is love." That is the greatest sentence that was ever written. That sentence is the key-note of the mission that begins to-day. Everything that you will hear in song or in word for the next four weeks in this mission revolves round that one central truth, "God is love." That sums up the whole contents of the Bible. If I were asked for a sentence to print in letters of gold on the outside of our Bible, a sentence that summed up the whole contents of the Book, it would be this one, "God is Love." That is the subject of the first chapter of Genesis, it is the subject of the last chapter of Revelation, and it is the subject of every chapter that lies in between.

The Bible is simply God's love story, the story of the love of a holy God to a sinful world. That is the most amazing thing in the Bible. People tell us the Bible is full of things that it is impossible to believe. I know of nothing else so impossible to believe as that a holy God should love a sinful world, and should love such individuals as you and me, as the Bible says He does. But impossible as it is to believe, it is true. There is mighty power in that one short sentence, power to break the hardest heart, power to reach individual men and women who are sunk down in sin, and to lift them up until they are fit for a place beside the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Throne.

When Mr. Moody organized the church in Chicago, of which I am pastor, he was so anxious that everybody should always hear this one truth, and was so afraid that some preacher might come and forget to tell it, that he had it put on the gas jets right above the pulpit, so that the first thing you would see when you went in there on an evening was that text shining out in letters of fire.

One stormy night, before the time of the meeting, the door stood ajar. A man partly intoxicated saw it open, and thought he might go in and get warm. He did not know what sort of a place it was, but when he pushed the door open he saw the text blazing out, "God is love." He pulled the door to, and walked away muttering to himself. He said, "God is not love. If God is love, He would love me. God does not love a wretch like me." But it kept on burning down into his soul, "God is love! God is Love! God is Love!" After a while he retraced his steps, and took a seat in a corner. When Mr. Moody walked down after the meeting, he found the man weeping like a child. "What is the trouble?" he asked. "What was it in the sermon that touched you?" "I didn't hear a word of your sermon." "Well, what is the trouble?" "That text up there." Mr. Moody sat down and from his Bible showed him the way of life, and he was saved.

I hope it will break some of your hearts. I am not going to tell you what I think of the love of God. I am going to give you the Bible's plain statements about it. There are people who start out with this text as a foundation, and build a superstructure of speculation that contradicts the plain teaching of the very Book from which they have taken their foundation-stone. Now, nothing can be more illogical than that. One of two things is certainly true. Either the Bible is true, or it is not true. If the Bible is not true, we have no proof that God is love, so that all these universalist schemes, built on the foundation that "God is love," crumble away. If the Bible is true, these schemes which contradict its plain teaching are false. You can take whichever horn of the dilemma you please. Whichever you take,

the shallow universalism of the present day crumbles away.

What does the Bible tell us as to how God shows His love?

1. That God shows His love by pardoning Sin.—Isaiah 55:7: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” God tells us plainly in His Word that He is willing to forgive any sinner that lives, no matter how deep down he has gone, if he will only turn from sin and turn to Him; and He will forgive him the very moment he does so. Of course, God cannot forgive a man while he holds on to his sin, and retain His own moral character.

I have a boy. I love that boy, and I would give a great deal to see him now. I believe there is nothing that boy could do but, if he repented and turned from it, I would forgive him. But I could not forgive him if he held on to his evil way. I could continue to love him and seek to save him, but I could not forgive him. And God cannot forgive us, and remain what He is—a holy God—until we are ready to quit our sin. But the moment we are, He will have mercy upon us, and He will abundantly pardon. If the wickedest man or woman in Edinburgh should have come in to-night—and I hope they have—and should here and now turn from sin, the moment they did so, God would blot out every sin they ever committed.

I knew a millionaire in New York City who turned his back on all his business and money-making to save the perishing. When he was going down one of the streets one night, a poor woman came out of an underground den of infamy and groaned as he passed. My friend stepped up to her and told her of the love of God. At first she would not believe, but he persuaded her that God loved her. He gave her a shelter. She did not live long—only about two years—but before she died, Nellie Conroy stood up before a great audience in the Cooper Institute, and told them how God had saved her. Tears were streaming down the faces of all. A little while after she lay dying, and, as my friend came into the room, she said: “Uncle Charlie—he was not her uncle, but she called him so for the love she bore—“I will soon see, in a few hours, little Florence, and I will see Jesus.” And Nellie Conroy, the pardoned and blood-washed sinner, went up to behold the King. There is not a man or woman in Edinburgh that God will not save the moment they turn from their sin.

2. God shows His Love by taking account of Sin, and punishing it.—Hebrews 12:6: “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” People think God will allow sin to go on unchecked, unrebuked, unpunished. “God is love,” and therefore He takes account of and punishes sin. There are fathers who are so selfish that they will not punish their children when it is necessary for their good. It hurts their feelings, as it does to all true fathers; and they are so selfish that they sacrifice the welfare of the children in order to spare their own feelings. That is not love but consummate selfishness.

One of my children disobeyed me. I said to myself, “That child must be punished.” Oh, how I studied to find some way out, but I could not do it. I knew that for the child’s highest welfare, punishment must be administered, and the child was punished. I suffered a great deal more than the child, but I loved the child enough to sacrifice my feelings for the child’s welfare. God suffers when you and I are punished; but He loves us so much, that when we need to suffer He administers the suffering Himself.

A gentleman with whom I was staying said to me one day, “Would you like to take a drive?” We went out to a cemetery, and came to a place where there were three graves. One was long; it was an adult one, and in it his wife was buried. In the two short graves were the bodies of his two daughters, all he had except a baby boy. We knelt and prayed by the side of the graves. As we were driving back to town the gentleman said, “I pity the man that God has not chastened.” What did he mean? He meant that he had been a man of the world, an upright man, but not a Christian. One night when he came home his wife said, “Porter, one of the children is sick.” In a few days she was cold and dead; and, as she lay in the casket, he knelt down and promised God to take Christ as his Lord and Master. But he lied to God, and forgot all about his resolution. Some time after he came home again, and his wife said, “Porter, the other child is sick.” In a few days she also lay cold and dead. Once more he knelt down and promised God that he would become a Christian, and kept his word. All the holiest, deepest, purest joys of life had come from his great sorrow.

Are you in sorrow? It is because God loves you. Are there some here resisting the entreaties of God’s mercy and grace? I beseech you to repent. I tremble for some men and women, for those who know the way of life, with whom God is striving by His holy Spirit, but who will not come to Him. I tremble for them, because I know that God loves them. You think that is a very strange reason for trembling for a man. No, I know God loves you, and so loves you that, if He cannot bring you in any other way, He will bring you by sorrow and heart-ache.

A friend of mine in Chicago, Colonel Clark, spent his fortune in saving the lost. He went down every night to preach the Gospel in a mission. There was one man who had been attending and resisting God’s entreaties of mercy for a long time; and one night as he came along Col. Clark said, “George, if you do not turn from sin pretty quick, I believe God will take away your wife and child from you, and will lock you up.” The man was very angry, and said, “Colonel Clark, you mind your own business; I will mind mine.” One month from that night George woke up on the floor of Rochester Jail. His wife was dead, his child had been taken away from him to be put into better hands than his. Right there he took Christ as his Saviour, and now he is a preacher of the Gospel. Remember, God

loves you, and “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.”

3. God shows His love for us by sympathizing with us.—Isaiah 63:9: “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” That is one of the wonderful sentences of this book. The prophet is speaking about the children of Israel. Their afflictions were appalling, and the direct consequence of their own sin, a judgment sent by the hand of God, and yet the prophet said God suffered with them in their sorrow. It is true. There is not a man or woman here who is in trouble but God sympathizes with you. It may have come in any way, but if you have any trouble God sympathizes with you in it.

Some of you know what it is to have a child sick for a long time. At first friends came and sympathized with you, but their sympathy has grown cold; and, as you have watched day and night by that fading life you have said: “There is no one who sympathizes with me.” Yes, there is. God sympathizes with you. There are men and women who have a sorrow of such a character that they cannot confide it to any human ear; and they say: “Nobody knows it. Nobody sympathizes with me.” Yes, there is One who knows, and He sympathizes with you—God.

4. God shows His Love by His Gifts.—I cannot dwell upon that. I just want to speak of one gift. 1 John 3:1, 2: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” Oh, that wondrous gift that God bestowed upon you and me, that men and women like us should be called children of God! Oh, what love! Suppose on his coronation day King Edward, after all the ceremonies were over, had taken his carriage of state, and had ridden down to the East End of London, and had seen some ragged, wretched, profane boy, utterly uneducated and morally corrupt. Suppose his great heart of love had gone out to that boy, and, stepping up to that poor wanderer, he had said: “I love you. I am going to take you in my carriage to the palace. I am going to dress you fit to be a king’s son, and you shall be known as the son of King Edward the Seventh.” Would it not have been wonderful? But it would not have been so wonderful as that the infinitely holy God should have looked down upon you and me in our filthiness and rags and depravity, and that He should have so loved us that He should have bestowed upon us to be called the sons of God.

5. God shows His Love by the Sacrifice He has made for us.—Sacrifice; after all that is the great test of love. People tell you that they love you, but you cannot tell whether they really love you till the opportunity comes for them to make a sacrifice for you. I had a friend in the university. We thought a good deal of each other; but I did not know how much he loved me. Years after, one night when I was away preaching, this friend turned up at my house and got to talking with my wife. He asked a good many leading questions, and finally got out of her that I was in a position in which I needed fifteen hundred dollars. He did not say any more at the time, but next day he came to me and said: “You think of doing so and so.” “Yes.” “That costs money.” “I have a scheme to get it.” “What is it?” “I have plans.” “Well, what are they?” I did not think it was his business, but finally I told him. He said: “It will not work at all. See here. Just let me give you that fifteen hundred dollars.” “Well,” I said, “I am not going to let any man give me fifteen hundred dollars.” “Oh, you can pay it back.” “I don’t know about that.” “I will take my chances.” He insisted, and would not take “No” for an answer; he gave me that fifteen hundred dollars, and I have paid it back, but he did not know I would. I knew then that man loved me. God has proved His love. “God so loved the world that He gave”—gave what?—“His only begotten Son”—the best He had, the object of his eternal love—gave Him to suffer and die upon the cruel cross for you and me.

God looked down upon this lost world, upon you and me. He saw that there was only one price that could save us; and He did not stop at that sacrifice. He “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That is the most amazing thing in the Bible. You and I sometimes dwell upon the love of Christ, to give up Heaven for us. We look at Him in the courtyard of Pilate, fastened to the whipping-post, with His bare back exposed to the lash of the Roman soldier. We look at Him as the lash cuts into His back again and again, and again, till it is all torn and bleeding. Oh, how He loved us! But looking down from yon throne in heaven was God; and every lash that cut the back of Christ cut the heart of God. We see the soldiers with the crown of thorns, pressing it on His brow, and we see the blood flowing down. Oh, how he loved us! But every thorn that pierced His brow pierced also the heart of God.

Through the dusk of that awful day we see Him on the cross. We hear the last cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” We see how He loved us. But yonder, looking down from the throne of light and glory, was God; and every nail that pierced His hands and feet pierced the heart of God, because He loved you, and you, and you, every one of you. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Oh, it was wonderful! What are you going to do about this love?

I once heard a story which brought me such a glimpse of God’s love as I never had before. I do not know whether it is true or not. A man was set to watch a railway drawbridge over a river. He threw it open and let vessels through. He heard the whistle of a train up the track, and sprang to the lever to bring the bridge back into place, and as he was doing so he accidentally pushed his boy into the river. He heard the cry, “Father, save me; I am drowning.” What should he do? The man stood at the post of duty, brought the bridge back so that the train could pass over in safety. Then he jumped into the river to save his boy, but it was too late. He sacrificed his boy to do his duty. When I heard that story I wondered, if it had been my boy, what I would have done. That man owed it to those on the train to do what he did. God owed you and me nothing. We were guilty rebels against him, but “God so loved the world that He

gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

What are you going to do with His love? Accept it, or trample it under foot? Accept Christ, and you accept that love; reject Christ, and you trample that love under foot. I cannot understand how any man or woman in their right senses can harden their hearts against the love of God.

I remember one night at the close of our service we had an after-meeting. The choir were still sitting, and the leading soprano was unconverted—a thoroughly worldly girl. Her mother rose in the meeting, and said, “I wish you would pray for my daughter.” I did not look around, but I knew intuitively how that girl looked at that moment. I made it my business to meet her as she was passing out, and said, “Good evening, Cora.” Her eyes flashed and cheeks burned; she was very angry. She said, “My mother ought to have known better. She knows it will only make me worse.” I said, “Sit down”; and I turned to Isaiah 53:5: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” I did not say another word. It was not necessary. The anger faded out of those eyes, and burning tears of penitence ran down her cheeks. I went from home next day, and when I came back some one said, “Cora is sick.” I found her very sick, but rejoicing in Jesus. A few days after her brother came and said, “We think Cora is dying.” I went at once, and looked on the whitest face I ever saw. She had not opened her eyes all the morning; but, after I had finished praying, there came from those lips—still without opening her eyes—the most wonderful prayer I ever heard. She thanked God for giving His son to die for her. She told Him how she longed to live to sing to His glory, as she had sung in the past for herself; but “if it be not Thy will that I live and sing for Christ, I shall be glad to depart and to be with Christ.” And depart she did, with a heart conquered, transformed, by the love of God. What are you going to do with the love of God?

I have here a story cut from a paper to-day. Mrs. Bottome, of New York City, says that she had a friend in her girlhood of whom she lost sight completely for eighteen years. Going back to New York she was passing along a street, and up in a second story window she saw her friend’s face, surrounded by prematurely grey hair. She ran up to the door of the house, and said to the maid, “Take that card to your mistress.” “She is not at home,” was the answer. “Oh yes, she is: I saw her at the window”; and Mrs. Bottome rushed past the maid up into the room, and they fell into one another’s arms. “What has become of you for all these years?” asked Mrs. Bottome. The answer was, “Come into the other room, and I will show you.” In a room magnificently fitted up there sat an idiot boy of seventeen years of age, scarcely able to talk—a driveling idiot. His mother said, “My duty lies here, with my darling boy.” Mrs. Bottome says that in a moment of thoughtlessness she asked, “How can you endure it? I do not wonder you are prematurely grey.” I knew you would not understand my love for my sweet boy,” said her indignant friend. “It is no burden, no care, to live and serve my boy; and if, some day, he will only give one sign that he recognizes me as his mother, I will feel repaid for all the years of love I have lavished on him.”

That was but a faint image of the love of God. What are you going to do with this love of God? That boy did not repay his mother’s love; for, as Mrs. Bottome says, he was an idiot and did not know any better. You are not idiots. You know God’s love: how are you going to repay it?