

Love One Another

1 John 4:7-12

By [Rev. Benny Youngblood](#)

November 3, 2013 – Evening Sermon

In this study we will be in I John 4 and as we read this I want you to listen for three words because they will be in this passage three times. Listen for “love one another.” This is the Word of the Lord. I John 4:7–12 says

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Let's pray:

Father, we come before You and ask that You would take Your Word and speak to us through it and that You would reveal even deeper Your great love that You have for us. In turn, move in our hearts and lives that we would love one another even more and more. We pray this in Christ's Name, Amen.

Those three words are pretty clear in this passage of I John 4. We use the word love in a lot of different ways, don't we? You may have said to someone as you came into the service, “Hey I'd love to go get a cheese burger tonight” or you may have said to another “I love that shirt” or “I love that necklace.” As I was preparing for this I thought about the amusing things you can read in the Ripley's Believe it or Not books. I remember one I looked at a few years ago that had to do with love. There was a man named Marcel and Ripley tells his story. He fell deeply in love with a woman named Madeline. Marcel is a painter in Paris and he wanted to share with Madeline his great love for her so he decided to hire a scribe to write these three words 1, 875,000 times and he paid him to do it. He said to the scribe “I am going to say the words ‘I love you’ and I want you to repeat those words after me out loud orally and then I want you to write them down each time we do this. So they did this 1,875,000 times and when they were

through doing that they had between writing it and speaking it, communicated it 5,625,000 times. That's a lot.

This love is in the Bible but it's called Eros love. That is a love that a husband might have for his wife or a wife for a husband and a love full of affection. The Bible also speaks of another kind of love called Phileo love which is a love we have for one another, brotherly love, a family love in which we would serve and care for one another. Then there is third kind of love that the Bible speaks of and it's called Agape love. That's the Divine love that is sacrificial where one is committed to another in such a way that they'll do whatever it takes for that person's good no matter what the cost. They are willing to give of themselves in self-sacrifice with this Agape love.

The love used in the I John 4 passage is the Agape love, His love, the Divine love where we're to love each other in that way. The command is clear. As John writes about love, he in this one small letter, writes the word love 46 times and he speaks of three different types of love. One is God's love for us, two is our love for God and thirdly our love for one another. In this small passage He combines all of those with the emphasis on our love for one another.

As a shepherding pastor I get to hear stories of how you have shared your love with each other here in our church. Briarwood is a loving church. I'd like to read a couple of these notes that someone has shared with me that I believe will encourage you and your love for one another. "Dear Everyone, thank you again for all you continue to do for our family – prayer, visits, cards, phone calls, food and so many other things. We truly experience through all of you every day."

Another person writes, "Brothers and sisters, thank you for the meals you brought over to the house the last few weeks. Your acts of love have overwhelmed us with gratitude. It seems like just when we needed it we received a note from someone or a call. We especially want to thank you for your prayers for us. We never knew how much things like this meant to people until now when we're on the receiving end of them. Thank you for taking the time to show us that you love us. We love you all."

Another wrote this a few years back "In March I broke two ankle bones while in Israel with our Briarwood group. Would you be so kind as to express my thanks and appreciation to the men in the church who visited me in the hospital and have called me since I have been home? It is good to be a part of a large church with a small church concern. My ankle continues to heal but since has me housebound. As always the Lord knows best and has used this time for my good. Thanks be to God and a hearty thanks to the Briarwood church."

You are a loving church. God really shows your love to me and others around you. As I'm preaching through this I kind of feel like Paul felt when he was writing the letter to the Thessalonians about love. Paul says in I Thessalonians 4:9–10

says [9] Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, [10] for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more. As we study this passage that is my prayer that we would love more and more and that we would really understand even the depths of God's love for us and it would overflow.

Let's look at I John 4:7 which says 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Dear loved ones, who are loved by God, loved by John for you are loved, now love one another. God is our source of love. I John 4:8 ends with 'God is love.' God is the only Source of true agape love. He is not only the only source but God is love. It is His very nature that moves us to love. The very fact God is love moves us to love.

C.H. Dodd writes this in his commentary; "This statement (speaking of God's love) might stand along other statements such as 'God creates,' 'God rules,' 'God judges' to say God is love implies that all His activity is loving activity even His judgment. 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 which is love."

We're to love one another because God is love. Augustan said "If nothing were said in praise of love throughout all the pages of the epistle, if nothing throughout all the pages of Scripture and this one thing only, all we were told by this voice of the Spirit of God for God is love nothing more ought we require." Do you get it? There is nothing more required. Just the fact that God is love is all that is needed that we would love one another.

I John 4:7–8 says 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. Love is the Christian distinctive. Francis Schaeffer wrote a small book titled The True Mark of a Christian and the whole point of his book is that love is the true mark of a Christian. David Jackman said in his commentary "Love is the irrefutable evidence of the new birth."

We have a likeness to our physical father. You can find out who you are linked to through DNA research and who your ancestors are. This passage tells us there is a spiritual DNA in every Christian, per say. There is a spiritual quality in every Christian and that's agape love. That is the one distinctive that separates us from the world – the love of Christ.

He also says in this passage that the opposite is true. I John 4:8 says 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. I John 4:20 says [20] If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not

seen. Love is our Christian distinctive. It distinguishes us from anyone else. Love is not a dormant word but it is actually an action word. It always shows itself. It always manifests itself. It always reveals itself. It always takes action.

That is why we see in I John 4:9–10 that God manifests His love. God is love and all love comes from God. God manifests His love to us. I John 4:9–10 says 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. God reveals His love to us. This passage tells us that God took the initiative. God sent His only Son. Out of God's love He sent. It reminds us of another book that John wrote, John's Gospel and another verse that is very common us is John 3:16 that says [16] For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. God loves, God gives and God manifests His love to us by sending His only Son.

David Jackman again says "The initiative is entirely God's. He decides to manifests His love to those who do not love Him and who do not want to love Him, to enemies and rebels armed to the teeth against Him, to a world of lost sinners. Let us acknowledge once and for all that if it were not for the fact that God is love we would have no expectation of mercy or forgiveness, no hope, no future. The initiative in the work of man's salvation belongs entirely to the God of love."

Also in this passage we see that God sent Christ with a purpose. He sent Christ to give us life. Why? We were dead. We know that the Bible teaches us that we are dead in our trespasses, our sins and we had no hope. We had one thing to look forward to and that was hell, eternal damnation. Outside of God and His love He decided to break in and do something on our behalf. God sent His Son with a purpose and that was to give us life and to give us forgiveness in Christ. Notice in I John 4:10 that it says ...not that we have loved God but that he loved us. God didn't send His Son because of anything good in us. He didn't send His Son because we loved Him. No, we didn't love God. We were enemies of God, the Bible says. There was nothing in us that wanted to seek Him, but He loved us so much that He sent His Son. It wasn't that we loved God but it was that He loved us.

I John 4:10 concludes but saying ... he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Propitiation is a big word but simply means to appease for someone's wrath. Some translations use 'atoning sacrifice' in place of propitiation. God is a Holy God and a just God. As our very nature we sinned against God and we're hopeless and helpless. There is one result of our sin and that is to pay the penalty. The rightful penalty is death, eternal separation from God but God in His love, loved us so much that He decided to send His Son to pay our sin debt. He died on the cross for our sin to pay for our sin that He might give us everlasting life. Isn't that great news! God so loved us that He gave His

only begotten Son that He might die for you and me. What manner of love is this that we would be called children of God! This is an indescribable gift.

As we understand it more and more and grow as Christians we are just taken aback more and more of God's amazing love. How can it be that You my God would die for me? God loves us and He sent His only Son to die for you and me. He showed His love. He manifested His love.

John Stott says this in his commentary, "God loves sinners who are unworthy of His love and indeed subject to His wrath. He loved us and sent His Son to rescue us not because we are loveable but because He is love. So the greatness of His love is seen in the costliness of His self-sacrifice of the holy undeserving. A clearer manifestation of God's love could not be imagined." God loves us greatly and He has manifested that love to us.

As this passage moves on His love is so great it motivates us to love each other and that's exactly what I John 4:11 communicates when it says 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. If God so loved us in this way, then we ought to love one another. The word 'ought' is interesting because we use it differently than how it is used here in the Greek. We say 'I ought to wash my car' or 'I ought to call you sometime' and we use it as if it should mean 'should' but that's not what this word means. This word 'ought' in the Greek is the word for obligation. Let's switch out this word in this verse. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we are obligated to love one another. If God so loved us in this way we have the holy calling of God to love one another the way that He has loved us.

This verse also shows us that His love is a pattern for our love for one another. If God so loved us in this way, then we ought to love each other in the same manner. We should love each other with the same kind of love that He loves us. John 13:34–35 says [34] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [35] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. We are to love one another the same way that God loves us, with agape love. How does God love us? We could spend a long time talking about the depth of God's love but one way we know is that being full of grace God loved us when we didn't deserve it. He loves us with a gracious love.

It's not easy to love people when they don't deserve it, is it? Yet that is how God tells us to love each other. This kind of love needs to start in our homes. Those we know the best like our family and close friends we tend to build up higher expectations on them before we'll love them. We end up falling in the trap to make the people we care the most about have to deserve our love. God is saying not to do that. Love one another with a gracious love. Love them because you love them. We need to do that in our homes and in our church family. Do we avoid those who are hard to love? We all fall prey to that sometimes but God says not to do that. Love those who don't deserve it and be gracious in your love.

What about those you can't identify with or when someone hurts your feelings? The Bible tells us that is not an option. God tells us to love one another with an agape love, with a gracious love. Schaeffer said in the book I mentioned earlier "The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture, how then is the dying culture going to consider us? Jesus said 'by this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you love one another.' What does this love mean? How can it be made visible? First it means a very simple thing. It means that when I have made a mistake and when I have failed to love my Christian brother, I go to him and say "I'm sorry, will you forgive me?" It may sound simplistic to start with that but it's not. This is the way of renewed fellowship, whether it is between a husband and a wife, a parent and a child, within a Christian community or between groups, if I am not willing to do this simple thing, the world has a right to question whether Jesus was sent from God and whether Christianity is true. There must be open forgiveness and though it is hard to say "I'm sorry" it is even harder to forgive. Many Christians rarely and never seem to connect their lack of reality of fellowship with God with their lack of forgiveness to men. We are to have a forgiving spirit even before the other person expresses regret for the wrong."

We need to forgive one another. We need to take the initiative like God took the initiative with us to reconcile a relationship with Him even though we weren't seeking it. God tells us to take that initiative to reconcile relationships in your home, in your church family, with those around you and other believers. Take that initiative. Reconcile. Keep short accounts. Don't let the sun go down on your wrath. All these things God has told us. Love one another and that's a key way we need to love one another, being full of grace with one another. Do you turn off your love when someone hurts your feelings? God says not to do that. Love them back. Reconcile. Forgive them. Make it right.

Another way that God's loves us is through sacrificial love. God did this by sacrificing the greatest thing He had and the greatest thing there is and that was Him giving His one and only Son to die for us. He wants us to love each other with that same sacrificial love. One of the best commodities we have is time. One way we can show love to one another is to sacrifice our time to serve one another, love one another, to listen, to care, to call to see how they are doing, to write a note even when there is not an issue going on with them but to just encourage them. That's another way we can show our love to one another and that's challenging to love with graciousness and sacrifice in all my relationships.

God says in I John 4:12-13, 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. God has given us His Spirit and the fruit of the spirit is love. God is love and He places His Spirit in us to enable us to love and to empower us to love. God will love in us and God will love through us. God will love your neighbor through you. God will love others through you.

It says in this passage that we abide in Him and He in us. We need to revel in who He is, in the Gospel and in His love for us. The more deeply we understand God's love for us the more deeply we will love others graciously and sacrificially. Secondly it talks about abiding in the Spirit and in Christ and that means having a surrendered life, to be totally surrendered to Christ and to have nothing between you and Him. It is that the Spirit of God would be in control of your life moment by moment and day by day. Thirdly as we abide in Christ we are to spend time with God who is love. The more time you spend with God, His Word and prayer it's amazing what happens. All of a sudden He gives you His heart to love others and His eyes to see how you can love others. It's all by spending time with Him in prayer and in the Word. Abiding in Christ moves us to love one another and empowers us to love one another.

I John 4:12 says, 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. We are the reflection of God's love to those around us. One commentator said "We're the window of how God loves." He loves others through us. We are the window of the love of God. We are the body of Christ. Christ, when He walked on earth loved perfectly. Now we are His body and we're to love others with His love, full of the Spirit and full of His love. Encourage one another is used over and over in the Bible and as you love one another it instills courage in other people to walk with God and to trust Him no matter what is going on in their life. When we love others it gives hope because they are reminded of God's love for them as we love them. They see and feel the love of God as we love them. We are the reflection, the window of His love for each other here in our church, our community and especially in our homes. God has commanded us to love one another.

Here is another note from someone that you reached out to. It says "Dearest friends, thank you so much for your outpouring of love that you have shown to us as we have gone through one of the most difficult times in our life. There were times that we did not know if we were going to make it another day and then we would receive a call or a note letting us know that you love us and that you are praying for us. We cannot tell you enough how much your continued love and care has meant to us. You have truly stood in the gap for us during this fight for our faith and our life. We now have hope where we had lost hope in those dark days. God used you to give us the strength to trust Christ even when we did not think that we could. Please know that God has used you in our life and for you we are eternally thankful." God uses you in the lives of others.

God will give you His eyes and His heart as we spend time with Him, revel in His love and as we reach out by faith and love one another. As I close I want to read this passage again. I John 4:7–13, and 21 says 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his

only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You that You are love and that You are the Source of true agape love and that You loved us so much that You gave Your one and only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. You gave us Your righteousness and eternal life in Christ. We ask You now God to love through us, to help us abide in You. God love through us and help us to love one another. We pray all this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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