



CALVARY
TUSCALOOSA

TEACHING PLAN
NOVEMBER 15, 2020



THIS IS HOW YOU KNOW: SHOW GOD'S LOVE

1 JOHN 3:11-24; 4:1-16

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TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying 1 John 3:11-24; 4:1-16. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: God has demonstrated genuine love through the person of Jesus, and He calls us to love others with our lives.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: The Christian life will always include self-sacrifice as we seek to point others to the person and work of Christ.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: As Christ laid down His life for our sake, we are called to lay down our lives for others.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- 1 How would you define love?
- 2 What are the people or things you love most in this world? How do you demonstrate that love in different ways?

Love might have lost some of its meaning for us. We often use the word love on a broad spectrum to describe how we feel about not only our family, friends, and significant others, but also our favorite movies, food, or Instagram account. We love our spouse and we love tacos. So, it is no surprise that we might need to be reminded of how God defines love in the truest sense. John brought us back to the heart of the matter, pointing us to God's nature as love and the natural implications that should have for our lives.

In today's text we get to the very foundation of love. Here we discover why love is such an important part of the life that is real. Love is part of the very being and nature of God. If we are united to God through faith in Christ, we share His nature. Since His nature is love, then love is the litmus test of our spiritual life. The nature of God is love and a person who knows God and has been born of God will respond to God's nature. This love is not a forced response, but a natural response for those who know and love God.

ALTERNATE INTRODUCTION

Who is someone in your life who truly reflects the love of God to you? How so?

How has this person sacrificed his or her own comfort, resources, and time for you?

The Book of 1 John leads us to consider our love for other believers. Christians should love one another because they have been born of God, making them brothers and sisters in Christ. When it comes to this matter of love, we see in today's text four possible "levels of relationship"—destruction (vv. 11-12); hatred (vv. 13-15); indifference (vv. 16-17), and Christian compassion (vv. 18-24).

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> Have a volunteer read 1 John 3:11-24.

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

¹⁶ *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. ¹⁹ This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*

²¹ *Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

Once again, John wanted to remind his readers what they already knew. The call to love one another wasn't a new message, it was what they had been taught from the beginning. While the false teachers sought to allure them with "new insight" and teaching, John was calling them back to the foundational truths of the love of God. In order to remind them what love is, John first described what love is not.

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- Why did John use Cain as an example of “what not to do”? What did Cain do wrong (Gen. 4:1-16)?

Notes:

- How do you typically respond when you find it difficult to love a Christian brother or sister?

John knew the life of a Christ-follower should look different. Instead of taking from others, we are called to give to those in need. This of course isn't a matter of material goods only, but a matter of the heart (3:17). When we are indifferent to the needs of others, it reflects an indifferent heart. If God has changed our lives and given us a new heart, then it will change the way we see the world around us and the people in it. God calls us to put our love into practice by how we treat and care for others. Our words only go so far, and our love has to be lived out (3:18).

- How does the Christian life look altogether different from what Cain demonstrated?
- How has Christ demonstrated a different kind of love? How should we respond to Christ's display of love?
- How does this kind of love look different from the world's definition?

It can be a sobering reality to look inward at our own hearts. As John called his fellow believers to love others because of how Christ loved them, they needed to take a hard look inward. When we do the same, we find a mixed bag of motivations and sin patterns. Our love for Christ is met with the tension of our flesh. But John would remind us that Christ is greater than our ability to have a pure heart.

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- How does Christ reassure us, even when our heart is torn between obedience and the flesh?

Notes:

- How does the reminder of this truth empower us to walk in obedience?

> Have a volunteer read 1 John 4:1-6.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. ⁴ You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Our culture tells us that whatever “truth” one believes is okay. The world wants to dismiss any kind of absolute truth and tell you to believe whatever makes you feel good. Even when it comes to Christianity, many people claim to believe in God, and claim to be Christians, but that doesn’t always mean they are walking in the truth. However, John reminded us in 1 John 3 that anyone who is abiding with God has the Spirit within them. It is the Spirit who gives us eyes and ears to see and hear truth, and to recognize lies.

- According to John, what is the determining factor for whether or not a teaching is sound?

- Why is Jesus the determining factor for truth? What does that tell us about the significance of Jesus in determining our theology?

Notes:

It can sometimes be daunting to confront false teaching and discern truth from lies. Especially when it comes from prominent or popular teachers and leaders. What if we don't know enough? What if we don't have all the answers? John reminded believers that we shouldn't put weight in what we know, but Who we know. We are God's children, and we have the Holy Spirit in us. That means it isn't by our power that we know or discern, but God's. It also means that the power of the One in us is greater than that of the world.

- How does verse 4 give us confidence as believers?
- How do these verses encourage us in confronting false teaching?
- What role does Christian community play in this process?

> Have a volunteer read 1 John 4:7-16.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ¹³ We know that we

live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

NOTES:

In John's continued effort to impress upon believers that love stands at the core of what it means to follow Christ, he declared that "God is love." Since love is God's very nature, anyone who loves God and loves others with His love is from God. Our only capacity to demonstrate love in the truest sense comes from God. Only once we are reborn in Christ do we have the ability to love in this way. Since Christ is the truest demonstration of God's love to us, we cannot love apart from Christ.

- What does it mean that "God is love"? What does that tell us about God's nature?
- How has Christ demonstrated God's love to us? How did the cross define love for us?

Once again, John gave believers practical help to know and recognize the presence of God in ourselves and others. The Spirit of God at work in us is how we abide in Christ and He in us. It is His Spirit within us who testifies to the person and work of Christ. Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have no means of loving God or loving others genuinely.

- Why would it have been important for believers to be able to recognize genuine love of God during the time of John's writing? Why is it important today?
- According to John, how do we reflect that God abides in us?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- 1 How does God's love for us—as demonstrated through Jesus Christ—call us to love differently than the world? How might it also involve sacrifice and suffering to love others with the love of Christ?
- 2 Where do you find it difficult to love others with this kind of love? How do you struggle to love someone, even in their brokenness? How have others loved you in your own brokenness?
- 3 Why does God's love require us to share about Him with others?

PRAY

Take some time to thank God for loving us through the person of Jesus. Thank Him for dying as our atoning sacrifice, even while we were sinners. Ask Him to give you a deeper love for those around you. Ask for His love to compel you in all you say and do.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How are you indifferent to the needs of others? Where do you put your own comfort ahead of the needs of others?
 - How does abiding with Christ constantly remind you of His truth? How does this lead you to love others in response?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize 1 John 4:7.

1 JOHN 3:11-24

3:11 Apostolic preaching emphasized that faith in a God of love moved believers to become people who love one another.

Notes:

3:12 On Cain, see Gn 4:1–16. John assumed his readers were familiar with this grim OT account.

3:13 The phrase if the world hates you shows that the division in 2:19 may have left hard feelings. Jesus foretold that his followers would not always be well received (Jn 16:2).

3:14 Our assurance of salvation rests in part on the love that God gives us for our brothers and sisters—that is, fellow believers. If we have this love, it is a sign of our salvation. If not, we are warned to examine our hearts before God.

3:15 There is no middle ground. Love is the gospel mandate (Jn 13:35). The person who neglects to love hates his brother or sister. This signals absence of eternal life. This verse recalls Jesus's teaching in Mt 5:21–22.

3:16 Jesus's death is not only the source of forgiveness of sin (1:7); it is also the yardstick by which believers gauge their own love for other believers.

3:17 Selfishness and God's love are mutually exclusive.

3:18 With the phrase in action and in truth, John declared that faith which is only talk is false faith.

3:19 Before him refers to God's observation of our lives. Faithful living results in confident hearts rather than guilt, evasion, or fear.

3:20 Human hearts can be self-deceived, but God who knows all things can grant assurance.

3:21 Confidence in the presence of God is no small thing. See Heb 3:6; 4:16; 10:19, 35.

3:22 We will receive whatever we ask in prayer if our prayer is within God's will (5:14). If we keep his commands, we will have no desire to request what God does not wish.

Notes:

3:23 His command and faith in his Son Jesus Christ are not different things but two aspects of a single, undivided love of God.

3:24 The role of the Holy Spirit has been assumed all along in this epistle, but he is mentioned outright here for the first time.

1 JOHN 4:1-16

4:1 God gives the Spirit (3:24), but there are counterfeits in the form of many false prophets. Discernment is a critical characteristic for Christian disciples.

4:2 God's Spirit does not condone false doctrine. By the end of the first century a view of Christ arose that denied his true humanity. In this view, the Son of God assumed human form for a time, but the divine Christ departed from the earthly Jesus before the crucifixion. John insisted that Christ had come in the flesh. God was truly and fully incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.

4:3 The words spirit that does not confess Jesus show that John was aware of people speaking by the power of spirits other than the Holy Spirit.

4:4 The one who is in the world probably refers to the devil, whether in person or as represented by his spiritual and human servants.

4:5 Spiritual deception is more attractive and plausible to non-Christians than the truth of the gospel message.

4:6 The we here consists of John and the apostolic circle and then all who accept their message. John seems to be stating that the clarity that results from people showing their true colors is valuable.

Notes:

4:7 The opening appeal here echoes Jesus himself (Jn 13:34) as well as 1Jn 3:11, 23; 4:1.

4:8 God is love does not mean that love is God. Love is an attribute of God, like righteousness and goodness. Those who truly know him share in this attribute.

4:9 The phrase live through him means not just biological existence, but the spiritual high road of eternal life.

4:10 The standard of love is not what humans feel but what God has revealed in Christ's life and death on the cross.

4:11 The phrase God loved us in this way means that Jesus was obedient to the point of death.

4:12 John used the phrase no one has ever seen God to refer to God the Father in his heavenly splendor, but God the Son makes the invisible Father clearly known (Jn 1:18).

4:13 His Spirit plays a crucial role in assuring and convincing believers. That is why it is so important not to tolerate the presence of false spirits (v. 1).

4:14 Like the "we" of the opening verses of 1 Jn, this we refers to John and other apostles. Few if any of John's readers would have actually seen Jesus in the flesh.

4:15 Confession of the truth about the Son is a condition for a relationship with God the Father.

4:16 In some verses John emphasized the ethical side of saving faith; in others he stressed doctrinal fidelity. Here his emphasis is on the devotion of the passions and heart—love. On God is love, see the note v. 8.