

Introduction: Do you love God? Love can be a very ambiguous and nebulous term. Often love is thought about only in terms of feelings of delight and joy. It is a the romanticized love of novels and movies. Love there comes as first sight, is easy and natural, and cannot be helped. If one truly loves someone, then there is a natural flow of emotion that isn't difficult and doesn't have to be worked at. A young man "just can't help" but to love that girl.

- This is not God's description of love. Love is hard, and rather than the images of candy and roses, the predominate images of love found in Scripture include sacrifice and death.
- **Series:** Knowing, Walking with, Imitating, Pleasing, Resting, Fearing; this week "Loving God" READ 1 John 4:7-11
- 1 John – the apostle John; it is not in the typical form of an epistle (intro/salutation/conclusion), but more of a tract or sermon; He is writing to fight early false teachings, early form of Gnosticism
 - **Gnosticism** (from the Greek word gnosis or gnosko) is about "knowing"; usually bound up with secret knowledge, salvation by information; it included secret theological knowledge; knowledge was so heightened, that the fundamental importance of love for others was diminished; the fruit of the Christian life was, according to these false teachers, seen in what you know, not how you live; this was particularly true in loving God disconnected from personal relationships
 - John responds to this error by laying out how we can know we are Christians; "know" used 29x in letter (a good start if you are asking this question); one of the key indicators has to do with love, shown in the frequency of the word in the letter; Love = used 46x in 26 verses (noun - agape/verb – agapao) largest concentration in ch.4

Gleanings from 1John on Love.

- 2:5 – whoever keeps His word (connected to v.10ff)
- 3:10 – distinguishes between children of God and the devil
- 3:11 – part of the basic Gospel message (Christianity 101)
- 3:14 – evidence of having passed from life to death
- 3:17 – seen in the sacrifice of worldly goods (2:15)
- 3:18 – seen in loving both with words and with deeds
- 3:23 – put on par with believing on the Lord Jesus Christ
- 4:7 – is a supernatural demonstration of the new birth
- 4:8 – lack of it is evidence of not knowing and loving God
- 4:12 – we cannot see God, but see His abiding presence in the love of Christians
- 4:20-21 – impossible to love God and not love His people
- 5:1 – loving God demonstrated in loving those begotten of Him

What does this love look like?

- 1 Corinthians 13 - Enduring patience and kindness, not envying, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, not keeping track of others' sins, not being happy when something bad happens to another.

Is This Mark of Love in Your Life?

- In 1John, the main objects are fellow **believers** but goes beyond to **neighbor** (Mt22:39) and **enemy** (Mt5:44)
- This is a love for those with whom we are in *real relationships* – spouse, children, parents, siblings, workmates, neighbors;
- Those most difficult to love are often those we are closest to and who we know best; it is much easier to "love people" generally than it is to love specific people in your life; while the details are sometimes difficult to work out, it is clear that all that is done is done in love

How Can You Possibly Love in This Way?

- We have no natural power to love in this way; it is supernatural, needing the New Birth and the Holy Spirit
- At the same time, John tells us things by which we can foster this love, truths so great that they should overwhelm us
- 1.) **Realize your moral obligation** - 3:16 4:11
- 2.) **Remember your divine adoption** - 3:1
- 3.) **Recall Christ's perfect pattern** - 4:9-10
- It was an **initiatory** love (coming before ours) and **propitiatory** (to satisfy, reconcile, appease, make payment)
- God's love for us is demonstrated in sacrifice, blood, shame, self-denial, taking up His cross
- It is this that is our perfect pattern, and our love for others will be weak and anemic because of our lack of taking seriously what God has done for us in His love; meditating the love of Christ for you gives power for you to love others

By This, We Have Confidence Before God.

- 4:16-19 the Christian knows and believes this, and that belief showing the fruit of love for others is what gives us confidence as we think about judgment, and as we will stand in judgment.
- You may feel inadequate about a lot of things, theological understanding, gifts, etc. but this should encourage