



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: 1 John 4:7-16

7 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 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: 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 them and they 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 them. (NIV)

Intro:

- Society and especially western culture like to talk about love
- ?Many concepts about what love is
- ?Everyone has their own definition of what love is
- John mentions love more than any other NT writer, so we need to understand what he means by love
- “Christians cannot begin to approach maturity in love unless they approach maturity in grasping something of the dimension of God’s love.” D. A. Carson, *Love in Hard Places* p. 193

I. The command/exhortation to love 4:7-8

7 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.

A. Love – the defining characteristic of God

- “The rationale given for the love command is that love is a defining characteristic of God. Therefore, those who have been born of God are also defined by their love for others – like father, like son, as the saying goes. In fact, exhibiting the love characteristic of the Father evidences a personal knowledge of God.... It is not everyone who loves in whatever way pleases him or her who has been born of God, but everyone who loves as God defines love.” Karen Jobes, Exegetical Commentary on the NT, p. 190

B. Love the mark of every person born of God

- “Love is so much inherent in God’s nature that love is a necessary mark of every person who is born of God: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love (4:7-8). In fact, the most spectacular way in which God has shown his love is in the giving of his Son. ...All the initiative is his; if we display Christian love, it is in response to his redemptive love.” D. A. Carson, Love in Hard Places pp. 192-3

C. Love is the present result of being born of God in the past – v. 7b

Everyone who loves **has been born of God** and knows God.

- John is not saying ‘our loving (of God &/or others) causes us to be born of God’ (‘has been born’: perfect passive tense: having been born of God (in the past) has present results — i.e., loving)... It is not that loving results in being born of God and knowing God, but loving is a sign of being born of God, knowing God, and sharing His loving nature.” [Duane Watson, Letters of John, p. 116]

II. Love defined 4:8-10, 16

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. ... 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

A. God is love

- “God’s defining love is best revealed in his salvation of humanity on the cross, for it was love that sent God’s Son into the world to suffer and die.” Karen Jobes, Exegetical Commentary on the NT, p. 191

1. Not the way love is understood in the world.

- “Although this biblical statement is so well known by those outside the Christian church, it is also largely, and sometimes grossly, misunderstood, for love is distorted and misunderstood in our society. Ask anyone on the street what love is, and you’re likely to get a variety of answers. “Love is a feeling,” some may say. “Love is a commitment.” Love is a sexual relationship.” Love is sharing.” “Love is an orientation.” Or perhaps, “Love is an abstraction that is hard to define, but you’ll know it when you see it.” Karen Jobes, Exegetical Commentary on the NT, p. 191

- **“When taken without God’s definition of love,...‘everyone who loves has been begotten of God &...knows God’ (4:7) is inevitably misused to justify just about anything the human heart can imagine, because the world is full of counterfeit love. People attempt to justify illicit romantic relationships & homosexual relationships in the name of a ‘love’ that is defined by merely human emotions & ideas, even as powerful as those may be. Parents & spouses may confuse a need to control with love.** Some may attempt to justify euthanasia or abortion by some false definition of love. But love is the opposite of sin, & anything practiced that the Bible defines as sin cannot be authentic love.” Karen Jobes, Exegetical Commentary on the NT, p. 199

- “[People] misunderstand what the Bible means when it says that God is love (1 John 4:8-10), they think that God intends a trouble-free life for all, irrespective of their moral and spiritual state, and hence they conclude that anything painful and upsetting (illness, accident, injury, loss of job, the suffering of a loved one) indicates either that God’s wisdom, or power, or both have been broken down, or that God, after all does not exist.

- God's wisdom is not, and never was, pledged to keep a fallen world happy, or to make ungodliness comfortable. Not even to Christians has he promised a trouble-free life; rather the reverse. He has other ends in view for life in the world than simply to make it easy for everyone." J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 91-92

2. Biblical love

- "True love is the love that originates with God himself, not whatever might pass for love by human origin and definition. The kind of love of which John speaks does not have its origin within the human being but is from God's Spirit." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 192

3. All God's actions are carried out in love

- "'God is love' is not equivalent to the statement 'God loves,' for loving is not just another action of God, like ruling. Rather, all God's activity is loving activity. Therefore, even God's judgment & punitive actions are subsumed by his loving nature. This is why the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is where God's love for humanity is most clearly expressed, for it is where love unites the demands of both God's justice & his mercy (3:16). John teaches that anyone who refuses God's love as expressed in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus cannot possibly know God truly (4:16)." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 198

B. God sent his one and only Son

- "The original language emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ, not his begottenness. God has many children, both sons and daughters throughout history, but Jesus is not just one of them. He is unique, the monogenes Son, who was with God and was God (John 1:1). Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 192

1. As an atoning sacrifice for our sin

- "God's love for the human race focuses on the problem of sin and our need for redemption.... Forgiveness of sin is at the heart of atonement and is the clearest expression of God's love. We cannot truly love God or others until we have received God's redemptive love offered in Christ, the forgiveness of our sin based on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ himself." And the good that came from his death was also unique, for his is the only death through which we have been given life." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 192

2. So that we might live through him

- "The good that came from his death was also unique, for his is the only death through which we have been given life." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 192

3. Freeing us from death

- "People can experience many horrible things in life, leading both Christians and unbelievers to question God's love. How could a loving God let such horrible things happen as we see continually in the daily news? ...John's answer would be that God has already loved each of us to the fullest extent by providing that crossover from death to life. For death is the worst this life can bring against us, but when this life has been swallowed up by eternal life, even the worst is not our defeat.... What greater gift of love could God give than freedom from death?" Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 200

C. The cross – the supreme expression of God's love

- "Both here and in the most famous gospel verse, John 3:16, the sending of his Son to be lifted up on the cross is the supreme expression of God's love for his fallen creation.... The wonder of God's grace is that any of us, in our willful, rebellious nature, have received the eternal life that Christ offers because of God's love." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 192

III. Loving others – 4:11-12

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.

A. God's love for us is the basis of our love for one another not our natural affinity to each other.

1. Love expressed is unselfish

- "We are to 'love one another', John insists in his first letter, both because God is love in his being

and because he has showed his love by sending his Son to die for us. And this love always expresses itself in unselfishness." John W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 290

2. Love does not come naturally

- "The church itself is not made up of natural "friends." It is made up of natural enemies. What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything else of that sort. Christians come together...because they have all been saved by Jesus Christ and owe him a common allegiance.... In this light, they are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake." D. A. Carson, *Love in Hard Places* p. 61

B. God's love focused its action on our greatest need.

- "God's love focused its action on our greatest need, and the achievement of such love secured the reconciliation of our relationship with him. Similarly, our love for others should recognize their needs, and we should seek to maintain a right relationship with them." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 193

C. Love is to meet the needs of others

- "The command to love is not a demand for forced intimacy or shallow sentimentality. It is a command to meet the needs of others when we encounter them. To act with redemptive love toward others means to forgive those who need our forgiveness, just as God forgave us in Christ. It means to spend our time and money (i.e. lay down our lives) meeting the needs of others." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 193-4

D. Loving others is a sign God lives in us

- "The author is interested in the obligation to love one another not for its own sake but because it is the sign that God lives in us." Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 174
- "While no one can claim to have seen God..., believers who love one another demonstrate that the unseen God lives in them." Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 177
- We have only to remember that our fellow Christian is a 'brother (or sister) for whom Christ died', and we will never disregard, but always seek to serve, their truest and highest welfare. To sin against them would be to 'sin against Christ'," John W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 290

E. Love is completed in us; it reaches its goal, when we love one another – v. 12

- "The point is... that God's love ...has been completed, carried out, its purpose achieved... Jesus carried out the work given to him by God, and now the believers by loving one another, carry the love given to them by God to its intended [goal]." –David Rensberger
- "The Gospel of John... generally uses the verb *teleioo*, not in the sense of making something 'perfect' (without fault or defect), but in the sense of carrying it through to completion, to its intended goal." – David Rensberger
- "John is saying that God's love for us reaches its intended completion or goal when we in turn express love for others, completing the reciprocity between God and his people." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 195
- John 13:35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
- "The concept of a personal religion that has no relation to the outward facts of our lives, or a private spirituality that has no bearing on our conduct toward other people, is as remote as it could possibly be from this author's understanding of what it means to abide in God and have God abiding in us. Modern Western society has tended toward an extreme individualism, and religion (or spirituality, if you prefer) has also tended to become highly privatized." David Rensberger

IV. Conclusion – 16a

16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

Knowing and relying on the love God has for us – v. 16a

Based on this we love others

"A person's love – for God and for others – is anchored in the cross of Jesus." Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 197

