



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us & his love is made complete in us...16b God is love, & the one who remains in love remains in God, & God remains in him. 17 In this, love is made complete with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," & yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother & sister. 1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, & everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of him. 2 This is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God & obey his commands. 3 For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden (1 Jn. 4:12, 16b-5:3)

1. Believers are in a Mutual Love Relationship with God (1 Jn. 4:16b-18)

- a. "...**in this'**...[points] **backward** to...the love... in v. 16. **Mutual love** – God's for the believer & the believer's for God." (Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: 1, 2, 3 John*, p. 265)
- b. Which gives us confidence on the day of judgment (4:17)
 - a. "John explains that **God's love has a transforming purpose in the life of the believer that allows Christians to face God's judgment with confidence.**" (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 265)
 - b. "God loves us by sending his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sin so that we might not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). **When that love has completed its work in our lives, we are freed from fear of death & can stand confidently before God's judgment, washed clean in Jesus' blood (Heb 2:14-18).**" (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 265)
 - c. "**If we love on earth, we can stand boldly before God in heaven on the day of judgment.**" (George Parsenios, *Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament: First, Second, And Third John*, p. 116)
 - d. "The confidence...in 4:17–18,...can be understood in terms of **believers being unashamed before the Son of God on the day of judgment.** This confidence...arises within the love relationship believers have with God." (Colin Kruse,

Pillar Commentary: John's Letters, p. 140)

- c. Drives out all fear (4:18)
- a. "If God's love for us is most clearly expressed in the atoning death of Jesus to cleanse us from our sins & free us from fear of God's judgment, then **there is nothing left for us to fear once we have fully comprehended God's love for us.**" (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 267)
 - b. "John points out that **fear implicitly entails a fear of punishment...related to the object of fear.** A fear of water implies a fear of drowning. A fear of fire implies a fear of being burned. A fear of God's judgment implies a fear of punishment...**But if God so loved the world that he sent his unique Son to deliver the world from perishing (Jn. 3:16), the punishment has already been meted out to Jesus Christ on our behalf. The mission of God's redeeming love is completed in a believer's life only when they realize fully that there is nothing of eternal condemnation left to fear.**" (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 267)
 - c. "The prospect of standing before the bar of God's judgment holds no terror for those growing up in love, 'for when the love of God is properly known, it calms the mind.'" (Clifton Black, *The New Interpreter's Bible Comm.*: 1, 2, 3 John, p. 852)
2. God first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19-5:3)
- a. God initiates love toward us (v. 19b)
 - b. "**God's love for us is the source of all genuine human love for God & others. Both as Creator & Redeemer, God has taken the initiative.**" (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 267)
 - c. "**All human love is distorted by our fallen nature, such that no one can truly love God or others as we ought.** It is only when a person comes to Christ & begins to realize the extent & nature of God's love that their ability to love rightly can be transformed by the work of the Spirit." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 267)
 - d. "God's sending of His Son so that we might live (4:9)...makes clear that our ability to demonstrate God's kind of love is based on His redemptive action on our behalf. It is that redemptive action that creates within us the perfect or mature love that drives out fear (4:18)." (Jim Shaddix, *Explore the Bible: 1, 2, 3 John...*, p. 59)
 - e. Then we love others (vv. 19a, 21; 5:1-3)
 - f. "**The command to love God was long-standing in the Jewish faith from which Christianity emerged.** Ancient Israel's foremost command was the Shema, 'Love the LORD your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your strength' (Deut 6:5). **Such love for God was coupled with obedience to the covenant, which included treating others rightly, both fellow Israelites & foreigners.** John's argument is similar: love for God must be constituted by love for others, particularly fellow believers." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 268)
 - g. "This command is reminiscent of Jesus' command to the disciples to love one another (John 13:34-35). Jesus told His disciples that if they loved Him, they would keep His commands (14:15). **Since love for a fellow believer is one of those commands, loving God & loving other believers must go hand in hand.**" (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 59)
 - h. "If someone has come to...faith in Christ, that person has been born again as a child of God into the Father's family (2:29; 3:9). This faith in Christ...produces love for God the Father...A person who loves the Father also loves the Father's child..." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 271)
 - i. The impossibility of not loving others & thinking we love God (v. 20)
 - j. "**The NT is full of ethical & moral principles, but John's writings are strangely void of anything other than the command to love one another.** In fact, John says, a person is self-deceived who claims to love God but is indifferent toward his church. So many in our modern society see themselves as spiritual, but have disdain for the church & organized religion. While churches & denominations certainly have their flaws & problems, **it is an oxymoron to think that one can love & worship God in splendid isolation from the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is only in community with others who have received God's atoning love in the cross of Christ that one can truly love God.** It is only in the ups & downs of relationships with other believers that one has the opportunities to love." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 275)
 - k. "**Throughout 1 John the author has proved conspicuously reluctant to allow any concept of 'vertical love' – God's love for us or our love for God – to ride unbalanced without its 'horizontal' counterpart – our love for one another (2:5-6; 3:10-11, 16-18; 4:7-8, 11-12).** It is no surprise that this section, focused on love's origin in God, marches relentlessly toward the coordinate love for one's brother or sister. This basic principle of verification is intensified with a fortiori argument: if one cannot love a visible sibling, how much greater is the impossibility of one's loving an invisible God?...**John concludes this section with a command that equalizes the vertical & horizontal axes of Christian life: 'those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.'**" (Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 852)

3. God's Love 'Completed' Through Jesus (Jn. 4:34; 5:36; 17:4)

- a. No one has ever seen God (4:12a; Jn. 1:18a)
- b. Jesus made God known through completing the work he sent him to do (Jn. 1:18b; Jn. 4:34; 17:4)
- c. Jesus made God's love known through his death (Jn. 3:16; 12:24; 19:30)
 - a. *"Viewing the Gospel of John & 1 John together, we might say that Jesus' cry from the cross, 'It is accomplished!' (Jn. 19:30), refers to his completion of what God had given him to do...."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit p. 252)

4. God's Love 'Completed' in Us (1 Jn. 4:12, 17-18)

- a. *"4:12 adds a new twist...a new & ongoing phase to the revelation of God's love...It is now placed in the hands of ordinary human believers. All they have to do is love one another, [i.e., cooperate with God's impulses within them] & the God whom no one sees...becomes visible. As Jesus made God known as love, so now the believers have the task of continuing this revelation."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit, p. 248)
- b. John's use of the word Teleioo means complete, not perfect
 - a. *"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, Op Cit, p. 250)
 - b. *"Teleioo' in general...means 'to complete an activity, complete, bring to an end, finish, accomplish.' Most of the uses in the Gospel of John are placed under this heading."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit, p. 243)
 - c. Not "his love is 'perfected' in us"
 - a. *"Most contemporary [Bible] versions use 'perfect'...to translate the forms of the Greek word 'teleioo' in 1 John 4:12, 17-18. In my view, however, 'teleioo' in Koine Greek did not mean what perfect means in Modern English, & we cannot really get at the sense of what 1 John is saying here until we rid ourselves of this particular translation."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit, p. 238)
 - b. *"'Perfect' raises all sorts of connotations, undertones, & overtones for contemporary users of the Bible, most of them quite unrelated to the Greek word that 1 John actually uses."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit, p. 242)
 - c. *"Webster's Dictionary gives definitions of perfect in contemporary usage that include entirely without fault or defect; flawless... Nothing in Webster's includes or implies 'brought to a conclusion' or 'fully accomplished'..."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit, p. 242)
 - d. But, "his love is made complete in us"
- e. A better translation of 4:12 & 17
 - a. V. 12b – *"If we love one another, God lives in us, & his love has accomplished in us what he wants."* (God's Word)
 - b. V. 17a – *"God's love has reached its goal in us."* (God's Word)
- f. God's love was never 'imperfect'
 - a. *"The thought in 1 John 4 is not that God's love ever was 'imperfect,' but that it only really comes to its intended completion in the believing community, whose acts of mutual love are necessary for God's love to do what God desired it to do."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit, p. 252)
- c. If we love one another, God's love is completed among us (v. 17a)
 - a. *"The unseen God, who was seen in his Son, is now revealed in his people if & when they love one another. God's love is seen in their love because their love is his love imparted to them by his Spirit."* (John Stott, The Letters of John,)
 - b. *"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, & now the believers, by loving one another, carry the love given to them by God to its intended [goal]."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit, p. 248)
 - c. *"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 & his people."* Karen Jobes, Op Cit, p. 195)
- d. As we love one another we make God known
- e. As we love one another we have no fear at the Final Judgment (v. 17b)
 - a. *"...The fundamental point of 1 John 4:17-18 is that, since God's love is being brought to its intended completion among the believers, they are – already in this world – as Jesus is, and therefore have no fear of the final judgment."* (David Rensberger, Op Cit, p. 250)
- f. As we love one another, as Jesus is, so also are we in this world (v. 17c)
 - a. *"1 John 4:17...coheres with the exhortation in 3:16 to be like Jesus through self-giving love for one another, as the finalization of God's love, that they are 'as he is-in this world.' But if believers are like the Messiah, the eschatological Savior, then eschatological judgment is not fearsome to them, because they are already there, on the other side of judgment. The divine love that has arrived at its completion, its goal, in their love for one another – signifies*

that God's ultimate plan & desire for the world has been attained in them. Love brought to its goal drives out fear of eschatological judgment, therefore believers already live in God's new creation & new world." (David Rensberger, *Op Cit*, p. 250)

5. The mission of God's love

a. Jesus was on the mission of God's love

- a. *"The Gospel of John presents **Jesus as being on a mission** as one who has been sent from God for a purpose."* (David Rensberger, *Op Cit*, p. 252)
- b. **The revealing of divine love...in the sending of Jesus to give life through his death was done with a purpose in mind,...& that purpose was not exhausted in the death & resurrection of the Messiah.** Rather, the intention of divine love 'from the beginning' was precisely **to create a community of mutual love among those who believe...**" (David Rensberger, *Op Cit*, p. 252)

b. Believers are also on the mission of God's love

- a. *"The Gospel of John presents **Jesus as being on a mission** as one who has been sent from God for a purpose...**1 John presents the believers in a comparable light**, as being entrusted & charged with carrying out the purposes of God in revealing divine love to the world & in the world."* (David Rensberger, *Op Cit*, p. 252)

c. God's love is brought to its goal in the believing community

- a. *"The thought in **1 John 4** is not that God's love ever was 'imperfect,' but that it **only really comes to its intended completion in the believing community**, whose acts of mutual love are necessary for God's love to do what God desired it to do. **The implication of this is that there was indeed a plan, something that God desired divine love to accomplish.**"* (David Rensberger, *Op Cit*, p. 252)
- b. *"In the Johannine texts specifically, 'teleioo' is used to speak of someone carrying a divinely given commission through to its proper & intended end or goal. **To say that God's love has been brought to its completion in believers' love for one another is to say that in this mutual love the intended aim of God's love has been achieved.**"* (David Rensberger, *Op Cit*, p. 252)

d. The mission of God's love is to generate love among human beings

- a. *"The mission of God's love & the aim of God's...action is to generate love among human beings, not in an abstract way, but **by creating concrete relationships & practices of love within a human community** (1 Jn. 3:16-18). This mission succeeds when it produces communities of those who believe in Jesus the son of God & love one another."* (David Rensberger, *Op Cit*, p. 252)