

God is Love. Why It Matters.

1 John #10

1 John 4:7-12; 16b-21.

Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. He is a God who relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing.

I once heard a story about a selfish man who inherited a rice field in India. The first season the irrigation water covered his fields and made them very fruitful. It also overflowed on to his neighbors fields, bringing a great harvest to them as well. But the next season he decided that he was being too generous to his neighbor by letting this water escape from his fields. So, he decided to build a dam to stop the water from overflowing to his neighbor. It was a bad mistake. In building a dam, he spoiled his own crop. The irrigation water brought blessing when it flowed to himself and to his neighbor. But when he built the dam, the water became stagnant and turned his field into an unfruitful marsh.

Dear Friends, God is Love. Love is who God is in His essence and character. The love of God is the water that creates the harvest in our rice field. But it was never designed to be contained by the dams we like to construct. It was designed to overflow to our neighbor's field. And if you construct the dam, you will destroy your harvest. But if you let the river flow, you will have a great harvest and so will others. Today, the message from 1 John is simple to understand. But it will take a lifetime to put into practice. It is this: God is love and why it matters. It matters because God's love initiates. In the Bible, God is the Seeker. So must we be. It matters because God's love demonstrates. God demonstrates his love for us in this way: that while we were sinners Christ died for us. So must we demonstrate it in our world. It matters because God's love accomplishes. We must allow that love to accomplish what it is designed to accomplish in our lives. We might not know exactly what it is designed to accomplish at times. But God surely does. And it matters because God's love demands. We must love because God first loved us. Do not build a dam. Do not build a dam. Let the river flow. The fact that God is love matters to each and every single one of us. And John tells us why in 1 John 4:7-12 and 16b-2.

⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us... ^{16b}God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

1. It Initiates (7, 9, 10, 18, 19)

- **Find My Phone:** (1) If you turned on the Find My Phone before it went the way of Amelia Earhart's "Little Red Bus," then you can pinpoint where it is. You can seek it out. (2) When it comes to your phone, you are the seeker. When it comes to you, God is.
- **How It's Initiated in the Passage:** John tells us 8 ways God initiates the loving relationship he has with us in this passage: (1) v7 - Love comes from God (he is the author and the source of it); (2) v7 - Everyone who loves has been born of God (God did the birthing); (3) v9 - This is how God showed (How he demonstrated without us asking); (4) v9 - He sent his one and only son (John 3:16 in a slightly different variation); (5) v10 - Not that we loved God, but that he loved us (we don't love God naturally. But he loves us naturally); (6) v10 - And sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sin (He sent him to be our substitute); (7) v18 - But perfect love drives out fear (It puts unhealthy fear outside the camp and the boundaries of the relationship); (8) v19 - We love because he first loved us. (There it is again. We don't love naturally. But He does. That's why He initiates the relationship.
- **How It's Initiated in the Bible:** (1) Elijah - "What are you doing here, in this cave, Elijah" (not: what are you doing in that cave?). (2) Philip - Jesus sought Philip out to call him as a disciple. (3) The Parable of the Lost Sheep - He leaves the 99 to look for the 1; (4) The Parable of the Lost Coin - Like the woman who loves 1 silver coin out of 10, she sweeps the whole house until she finds it. (5) The Parable of the Prodigal Son - The Father sees the son coming at a distance and takes off running. Why? Because He was looking. Because in the Bible, God is the Seeker. He's the initiator.
- **App:** "For the eyes of the Lord roam the earth too and fro to strengthen those whose hearts are committed to Him" (2 Chron. 16:9).

2. It Demonstrates (v9, v10, v17)

- **Kid Art Fundraisers at School:** (1) They adorn the walls in your office, your bedroom, your living room. They are everywhere in your home. (2) They are those finger paintings your child finger painted in elementary school. (3) They could have brought them home and you could have bought the frame at Walmart. (3) But instead, you bought them framed for 100 bucks at the school fundraiser. You knew they weren't from Pablo Picasso. They were from your Picasso. And you demonstrated your love by buying them.

- **How It's Demonstrated in this Passage:** If God as the initiator means that He, in His love for us, is the seeker, God as the demonstrator means his demonstration, exhibition, and display of that love is how he proves it. In this passage there are three specific ways, all of which begin with the word "this." (1) v9: This is how he showed his love – he sent his only son that we may live through Him (I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly). (2) v10 This is love...not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (For on the cross that Jesus died the wrath of God was satisfied. For I am his and he is mine. Here in the power of Christ I'll stand). (3) v17 – This is how love is made complete among us...in this world we are like Jesus (because as He is, so are we – KJV).
- **How It's Demonstrated in the Bible:** In the Bible, God is not only the seeker. He's also the Demonstrator. Thus, the reason for the song "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform. He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm." (1) In Exodus; he sent 10 plagues on Egypt so Pharaoh would let his people go. (2) In Joshua, he made the sun stand still. (2) In Samuel – He sent supernatural thunder at Ebenezer; (3) In 1 Kings – He sent fire from heaven and burned up a wet offering and fed Elijah by ravens; (4) In 2 Kings – He healed Naaman of leprosy; (5) In Daniel – He rescued from a fiery furnace and the mouth of lions; (6) In Jonah – He preserved Jonah's life in the belly of a whale (6) In the Gospels – There are too many to count. But the Virgin Birth, the calming of the Sea of Galilee, and the Resurrection seem pretty important. (7) In the Book of Acts – He poured his Spirit out at Pentecost and busted Paul and Silas out of prison in Philippi.
- **App:** "But God demonstrates his love for us in this: that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). God is love. Why is that important? Because God demonstrates it to us. Every circumstance in your life is an opportunity for him to work in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform, to plant his footstep in your sea and ride upon your storm.

3. It Accomplishes (v17-18)

- **Greatest Accomplishment This Week:** (1) I accomplished something this week I thought I'd never accomplish: being overly ecstatic and irate about the same thing within a 12-hour span. (2) I bought a riding lawn mower. When I saw it at Lowes at ½ price and I asked my wife for permission instead of forgiveness, I took the plunge. I was ecstatic. (3) But when I got it home, it worked for about 10 minutes before completely locking up and dying. That's why it was half price. (4) God's love accomplishes more than my lawnmower shopping.
- **It Accomplishes Something in the Future:** (1) In v17, John says love is made complete (it is complete) when it gives us confidence on the day of judgment. (2) According to the Scriptures, there are two types of judgment after human beings perish from this earth. The first is the Judgment Seat of Christ – Paul speaks of it in Romans 14. If you know Jesus as your Savior, this is where you will stand after you take your final breaths and give an account of your life. This is the palace where the Parable of the Talents comes to life and the master comes to collect his talents with interest. It's the place where nothing is hidden, and everything is known. We will all be there. But there is also the Great White Throne Judgment – John mentions it in Revelation 20. You don't want to show at this judgment because it involves being cast into a lake of fire and is for unbelievers. (2) God's love now accomplishes something great in the future. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, when Christ makes us give an account, God's love moves us from the knees trembling to "that's a great question, Lord, I'm glad you asked." That's confidence on the Day of Judgment. We don't have that confidence, not yet anyway. But that's what God's love now is working towards in your future if you know him.
- **It Accomplishes Something in the Present:** (1) In v18, John says a "perfect love casts out all fear because fear has to do with punishment." (2) In the Bible, there are two types of fear. One is healthy. The other is not. The healthy one is the fear of the Lord. It denotes the idea of reverence. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fools despise knowledge and instruction (Proverbs 1). The unhealthy one is trepidation. God's got a lightning bolt coming for him if I don't do this, or that. That's unhealthy because it produces fright and anxiousness when God has called us to be anxious for nothing.
- **App:** The questions from Jesus at His Judgment Seat will be different for each of us. But as for me, I firmly believe mine will be centered around these questions: "Derrick, did you really believe I loved you? Derrick, did you let yourself live in that love?" For he knows, those are my greatest spiritual struggles. He knows yours too. And his love helps you turn them into strengths, in the now and in the future.

4. It Demands (v10, v19, v21)

- **Holding the Door Open:** (1) I saw something at Chick-fil-a that gave me hope for humanity. (2) I saw a young man hold the door for others. (3) Two thoughts immediately came into my mind: (a) he saw it modeled; and (b) when he didn't do it that one time, his mom and dad demanded he do it the next time. (4) Since God is love, he demands it from us.
- **There is an Ought in His Demand:** All of them are based on God loving us first. V10 – "Since God so loved us, we ought to love one another." It's emphatic, meaning the emphasis is on the "ought." It's not a suggestion that says you "should." It's a command.
- **There is a Because in His Demand:** In v19, John says "we love because God first loved us." That's the reason. God will never ask anything of you he hasn't demonstrated himself.
- **There is a Must in His Demand:** In v21, John says "anyone who loves God must also love their brother or sister." In the NT, there are several words for love. There's eros, which is a romantic love of a husband and wife. There's phileo, which is a brotherly love. And there's agape, which is unconditional love. Agape is not suggested, it is demanded.
- **App:** You can't love unconditionally unless without being loved unconditionally. But because you have, you must. It's demanded, with no strings attached to it. Only an incarnation. Only a cross. And only a resurrection. God is love. Why does it matter. Because it is demanded!