

Introduction

My wife and I had ten children of our own, and we had the joy and responsibility of training them up in the ways of the Lord. When children are very young toddlers, they don't know the dangers around them, so parents must take precautions. We installed outlet plugs, cabinet door guards and similar things to protect against accidents. We also taught them to instantly obey our commands. You don't try to reason with a toddler, you teach them to obey. When they get too close to the road or some other danger, you make sure they hear you and you tell them to get away from it. However, as they get older, children and teenagers want and need to know why they should or should not do things. It helps them to know the reasoning behind what we do. Telling them, "Because I told you so!" is not what they want or need to hear. We set boundaries, based on God's word, and we teach them why they should or should not do something.

One of the things that I greatly appreciate about God is the way He treats us. He does not treat us like young children and simply tell us to do something, (or not to do something); He gives us His commands, but He also gives us understanding about why we should or should not do it. God treats us like adults, and reasons with us. He still expects obedience, but He gives us understanding of why we are to do it.

In our passage, God exhorts us to love one another. That is what He wants and expects us to do. Then, He tells us four reasons that we are to love one another. He gives us understanding of why we are to love one another. First, we are to love one another because it is the mark of a believer. Second, we are to love one another because of God's example to us for us to follow. Third, we are to love one another because it is how we abide in Christ. Fourth, we are to love one another because this is how we are perfected in love.

Love One Another

1. Because it is the mark of a believer
2. Because of God's example
3. Because it is how we abide in Christ
4. Because it is how we are perfected in love

(1 Jn 4:7-21) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. {9} By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. {10} In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. {11} Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. {12} No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. {13} By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. {14} We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world. {15} Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. {16} We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. {17} By this, love is perfected 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; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. {19} We love, because He first loved us. {20} If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. {21} And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."

1. **Because it is the mark of a believer** (1 Jn 4:7-8)

John begins with another exhortation. Earlier, he exhorted believers not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits. Now, he exhorts believers to love one another. Notice that he addresses the believers as “Beloved.” The Greek word is *agapetos* (Strong’s G27), which comes from *agapao* (Strong’s G25). It means beloved, dearly loved, and is “spoken only of Christians as united with God or with each other in the bonds of holy love.”¹ God wants believers to know that they are loved by him. Believers are His beloved children. He tells believers to love one another. This is another form of the same Greek word. This time the word is *agapao* (Strong’s G27), which is a verb. Believers are to give out the same kind of perfect, selfless, love that they have been given by God.

(1 Jn 4:7a) “Beloved, let us love one another...”

After John tells us to love one another, he tells us that love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. God is the source of love. The word for the love that comes from God is *agape* (Strong’s G26), which is the noun form of the same Greek word. This perfect, selfless, intentional love comes from God; He is the source. Then he said that everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”

(1 Jn 4:7) “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”

John had many purposes in mind when he wrote this epistle. He wanted believers to know if they had eternal life, i.e., were saved. Throughout the book he gave various signs of a true believer, so that it would be obvious to anyone if someone was a believer or not a believer. A believer has Christ in his life. A believer confesses his sins. A believer walks in the light, not in darkness. A believer has Christ in his life. Now, he tells us that anyone born of God, anyone who knows God, loves one another. Loving one another is a mark of a believer.

(1 Jn 5:13) “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

In the Gospel of John, he recorded the conversation that Jesus had with the disciples at the Last Supper. He told them, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Everyone would know that we are Christians by our love for one another. Our love for one another is not just a mark that we are a believer; it is a sign and a witness to everyone that we are Jesus’ disciples. When a person has been born of God, and knows God, he will have a love for others.

(Jn 13:34–35) “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. {35} By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

On the other hand, the one who does not love his brother does not know God. Why? Because God is love. If you know God and have received Christ into your life, you have that love inside of you. If you don't know God, you will not have that perfect love of God in your life.

(1 Jn 4:8) "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Even though believers have the ability and capacity to love inside of them, and are commanded to love one another, I have found that many believers do not understand God's love. I believe that is why Paul devoted a whole chapter in 1 Corinthians to teach us about God's love. In the first three verses, Paul told us the surpassing value of love. It is more valuable than tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and mercy. Love is more valuable than all of those gifts.

(1 Co 13:1-3) "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. {2} If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. {3} And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

Next, Paul gave us the characteristics of love. Love is patient, kind, is not jealous, does not brag, and is not arrogant. Love does not act unbecoming, and it does not seek its own. Love is not provoked and does not take into account a wrong suffered. It does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believe all things, hopes all things, endures all things. In my marriage counseling with people, many have said that they love one another, but cannot live together. When I ask them about that statement, and in particular, about love, they say they love one another. As I listen to them, they are impatient with one another. They are not kind to one another. They act rudely and unbecomingly. They are selfish, and do not seek the best for the other person. They are provoked, and it is obvious to me that they have lots of past offenses stored up in the closet of their heart to bring out whenever they feel they have a need. They take into account all the wrongs suffered, and can give details about all of them. They don't rejoice in the truth, but only in their side of the story. They don't bear all things, and don't want to endure all things. When I take couples through these characteristics, one by one, and ask them if they are demonstrating these characteristics, they come to the realization that they have never loved one another with God's perfect love. They have had physical attraction for one another, but have never had a selfless, sacrificial, perfect love for one another. Paul wrote this so that we could learn and understand this perfect love.

(1 Co 13:4-7) "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, {5} does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, {6} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

In the last section of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul wrote about the duration of love. Love never fails. The gifts will be done away. Knowledge and prophesy will be done away, but love will never be done away. He concluded, saying, "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three, but the greatest of these is love."

(1 Co 13:8-13) "Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of* prophecy, they will be done away; if *there are* tongues, they will cease; if *there is* knowledge, it will be done away. {9} For we know in part and we prophesy in part; {10} but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. {11} When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason

like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. {12} For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. {13} But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Paul did more than try to explain love to us; he continually prayed for people to know and understand God’s love. In Ephesians 3, he wrote, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” He wanted believers to be rooted in God’s love. He prayed for us to be grounded in God’s love. He prayed that all the saints would comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of God’s love, and to know the love of Christ.

(Eph 3:14–19) “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, {15} from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, {16} that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, {17} so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, {18} may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, {19} and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

Paul also taught us to pursue love (1 Cor 14:1). He told us that all things should be done in love (1 Cor 16:14). He wrote that the love of Christ should control us (2 Cor 5:14). He said that we should be sincere in our love (2 Cor 8:8). He wrote that we were to serve one another through love (Gal 5:13). He prayed that our love would abound still more, and in knowledge and all discernment (Php 1:9). He told us to put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity (Col 3:14). Paul taught about love, and was constantly exhorting and encouraging believers to love one another.

2. **Because of God’s example** (1 Jn 4:9-11)

The second reason that believers are to love one another is because of God’s example. He wrote, “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” God’s example of sending His only begotten Son to die and be the propitiation or satisfaction for our sins teaches us about His love.

(1 Jn 4:9-10) “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. {10} In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”

Jesus’ demonstration of love by laying down His life helps us understand His perfect love. Jesus said that there is no greater love than to lay your life down for your friend.

(Jn 15:13) “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

(Ro 5:8) “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

The Father’s love, and Jesus’ love for us not only teaches us about His love, but they are examples for us to follow. John said, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” We are to love one another in the same way that God loved us. We are to follow His example.

(1 Jn 4:11) “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

At the Last Supper, after washing the disciples’ feet, He told them, “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.” A few minutes later He gave them the commandment to love one another just as He had loved them. He said “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Jesus set the example by loving them, and we are to follow that example and love one another.

(Jn 13:15) “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

(Jn 13:34–35) “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. {35} By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians about how husbands and wives were to act toward one another, He exhorted husbands to love their wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Once again, Jesus’ example of love is the example that we are encouraged to follow in our lives and relationships.

(Eph 5:25) “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,”

3. **Because it is how we abide in Christ** (1 Jn 4:12-16)

The third reason that God gives for us to love one another is it is how we abide in Christ. John wrote, “No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit.” The Holy Spirit in us is a sign that He abides in us. Then, John wrote that “we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” We know from John 3:16 that it was out of love that the Father sent the Son to us. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. When we receive Christ, God comes in to us and abides in us.

(1 Jn 4:12–15) “No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. {13} By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. {14} We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world. {15} Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

One of the pastors that I mentor in Kenya asked me last week about how God abides in us. I said that he asked a good question. In John 14:23, Jesus said that if we love him, we will keep His word; and the Father will love us, and the Father and Jesus will make their abode in us. The

pastor wanted to know how the Father and Son abide in us. I told him that when we receive Christ, He comes into us. God is Spirit, and it is the Spirit of Christ that comes into us. I took him to Romans 8, where Paul talks about the Spirit of God dwelling in us. He said, “you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” Notice that the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are used interchangeably. That is because the Father and Son are One. The Holy Spirit in us is the Spirit of Christ, and He is also the Spirit of God. We have the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit dwelling or abiding in us.

(Ro 8:9–11) “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the **Spirit of God** dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the **Spirit of Christ**, he does not belong to Him. {10} If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. {11} But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

In verse sixteen, John wrote, “We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” Our love for one another is how we continue to abide in Christ.

(1 Jn 4:16) “We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

Loving our brother is just one of several ways that we abide in God. In John 15:9-10, Jesus said that if we keep His commandments, we will abide in His love.

(Jn 15:9–10) “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. {10} If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

In 1 John 2:6, John wrote that we abide in Him when we walk in the same manner that Jesus walked. Similarly, in 1 John 3:6, John wrote that no one who abides in Him sins, meaning that we must walk in the Light; we must walk in righteousness.

(1 Jn 2:6) “the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

(1 Jn 3:6) “No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.”

In 1 John 3:24 John wrote again that if we keep His commandments, we will abide in Him, and He in us. In our passage today, we find that it is by loving our brother that we abide in Him. Some of these are interrelated. His commandment to us is to love our brother, and by keeping His commandment we abide in His love, which is the same as “the one who abides in loves abides in God, and God abides in him.

(1 Jn 3:24) “The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”

4. **Because it is how we are perfected in love** (1 Jn 4:12, 4:17-21)

The fourth reason that God gives for loving our brother is because it is how we are perfected in love. In verse twelve, John wrote, “if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.” Then, in verse sixteen and seventeen he wrote, “the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us.”

(1 Jn 4:12, 16-17) “No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.... {16} We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. {17} By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.”

The words, perfect or perfected are used four times in the passage. The Greek word for perfected is *teleioo* (G5048), and it means to make perfect, finish, fulfil, or be perfect. The word for perfect is *telios* (Strong’s G5046), and it means perfect, complete, or mature. Both of these words come from the Greek word, *tello*, which means to set out for a definite point or goal, the point aimed at as a limit, the conclusion of an act or state. Just before Jesus gave up His Spirit, He said, “It is finished.” He used the Greek word, *teleo*, meaning He had accomplished the goal; He had finished the course; He had accomplished what the Father sent Him to do. Scholars say that in the Greek world, it was also used as an accounting term, meaning it is paid in full.

(Jn 19:30) “Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished (teleo)!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”

When Paul wrote in Colossians that his purpose was to present every man complete in Christ, he used the same Greek word, *telios*, which meant that his goal was to present every man complete, or mature. When we think about love, God wants us to have a perfect and mature love. When we become a Christian, the Spirit of God comes in us and we have the ability to love. However, as we grow and mature in Christ, we develop a more mature love, which is what God desires in all of us.

(Col 1:28–29) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete (teleos) in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

When I met my wife, Karen, we had an immediate connection. I enjoyed being around her. She was fun to be with, and was full of life, and she is still fun and full of life. We talked, went on walks together, and spent as much time as we could together. I fell in love with her. However, I had just received Christ, and I did not have a mature love. I did not have the kind of love that Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 13. Next month, we will celebrate our forty-eighth year of marriage, and our love for one another is much more mature. God has been perfecting our love in us, which is what God wants to do in each of our lives. When we love one another, He perfects and matures that love in us for other people. As we practice loving others, we get better at loving others; our love is perfected through practicing love.

John gives a side benefit of love being perfected in us; it is so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as He is, so also are we in the world. How does it give us confidence? We have confidence because there is no fear in love; perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. When we abide

in God's love, and His love is perfected in us, we will not fear judgment. Those who fear judgment have not been perfected in love.

(1 Jn 4:17-18) "By this, love is perfected 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; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."

In John 5:24, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." Therefore, we know that when we receive Christ into our lives and become a believer, we will not come into judgment. Those who have not believed and received Jesus will face judgment. When an unbeliever dies, he goes to the place of the dead, which is called Hades in Greek, or Sheol in Hebrew. Their souls will wait there until the Great White Throne Room judgment. Unbelievers will stand before God and be judged. Then, they will be sent into eternal punishment.

(Jn 5:24) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

Believers, on the other hand, have passed out of judgment and have eternal life, which is life with God. When a believer dies, he or she does not go to the place of the dead; his spirit and soul go directly to heaven to be in the presence of the Lord. In Philippians 1, Paul is writing from prison, and he speaks about the possibility of being put to death. He said, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."

(Php 1:21–24) "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. {22} But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. {23} But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; {24} yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."

We know that Jesus is not in the place of the dead. Jesus went back to the Father. Jesus told His disciples numerous times that He had come from the Father, and was going back to the Father. In John 13:1, at the Last Supper, John records that Jesus knew His hour had come and that He would depart out of this world to the Father. In verse three, John recorded that Jesus had come forth from God and was going back to God. In John 16:28, Jesus said, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father. Paul knew that Jesus was with the Father, and if he died, he would be with Christ in heaven.

(Jn 13:1–3) "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end....{3} *Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,"

(Jn 16:28) "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."

In Romans 8:34, Paul wrote that Christ died, and was raised, and is now at the right hand of God, and is interceding for us. Just as Paul knew that if he died, he would be with Christ, we also know that when we die, we will be with Jesus in heaven. We will not be in the place of the dead awaiting the day of judgment.

(Ro 8:34) “who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

That does not mean that Christians will not give account to God. Believers will give account to God, and there will be various crowns given out. There will be rewards for our labor here on earth. Leaders will give account to God for the people God gave them to oversee and care for. In Hebrews, believers are exhorted to obey and submit to their leaders, and to let them oversee them with joy, or it would not be profitable for them. God will not reward some behavior, but He will give out crowns for others.

(Heb 13:17) “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

A number of years ago I led a men’s conference, and the theme was on the fear of the Lord. I had several different pastors focus on different aspects of the fear of the Lord. There was some concern by some pastors about teaching people to have a fear of the Lord. They said that believers are not to act in fear, but in love. They said that our obedience should be based on love, not fear, and that perfect love casts out all fear. That showed me that many pastors do not understand the fear of the Lord, and in particular, this passage.

All of us should have a fear and reverence of the Lord. He is holy, pure, all powerful, and the Creator of the heavens and earth. We should all have a fear of the Lord. There are tremendous benefits to having a fear of the Lord. In fact, in just the book of Psalms and the book of Proverbs, God gives us twenty-nine benefits for having the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Pr 9:10). The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life (Pr 14:27). The fear of the Lord helps us avoid evil and to live upright lives (Pr 16:6). We find in Psalms 25:14 that the Lord confides in those who fear Him, and He makes His covenant known to them. In Psalms 31:19, God stores up His goodness for those who fear Him. These are just a few of those benefits. I want all these benefits and blessings, so I pray for more fear of God in my life; and I think that this is what all of us want.

What John is writing about is a fear of judgment, which is something quite different. This passage is not saying that we should not live our lives with a fear and reverence of the Lord. It is saying that when we have a love that is perfected, we will have confidence about judgment. We will be assured of our salvation and we will know that we will not stand before the judgment seat. Loving our brothers is one of the many ways that we know that we are believers. Those who do not love their brother do not know God, but those who know God love their brother. So, when we love our brother, we will know for certain that we are believers and we will not fear judgment and the eternal punishment that comes with the judgment.

This is very clear in the verses nineteen and twenty. John wrote, “We love, because He first loved us.” The only way we can love is that God first loved us and put His seed and His Spirit in us so that we could have a perfect love. Those who do not love do not know God, and they cannot love their brother with a perfect love.

(1 Jn 4:19) “We love, because He first loved us.”

Then John said, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.” I have had many people tell me that they love God and are “tight” or “good” with God, but it is people they don’t like. Many have told me that they pray and talk to God at home, but they don’t want to go to church and be around all those hypocrites. These people do not love their brother. They may think they are good with God, but God tells us if they don’t love their brother who they have seen, how can they love God whom they have not seen. Most of these people have been offended by someone at church. They need to know that love does not take into account a wrong suffered. They need to know that love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. These people need to forgive the ones that have offended them, and they need to be perfected in love. When they begin to practice loving their brother, they will become perfected in love.

(1 Jn 4:20) “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

John began this discussion with an exhortation to love our brother, and he ends this discussion with a reminder of God’s commandment to love our brother. He wrote, “And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

(1 Jn 4:21) “And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

Conclusion and Applications

Jesus’ commandment to us is to love one another. We are to love one another just as He loved us. Jesus set the example for us to follow. Loving one another is the mark of a believer. Those who love their brother know God and those who do not love, do not know God, for God is love.

We are also to love one another because it is how we abide in Christ. Fourth, when we love one another, we are perfected in love. We develop a more complete and mature love. This perfect love gives us assurance that we know the Father and that we will not be judged. We will not fear judgment, because a perfect love casts out all fear.

Let’s look at some applications from this passage. First, there may be someone today that realizes that you don’t love other people. You have always struggled with loving others. John wrote that those who love not, know not God, for God is love. My question to you is, “Do you know the Lord? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He came in the flesh and died for our sins, and was raised from the dead? Have you received Christ into your life and confessed Him as your Lord? If you have not believed and received, let me encourage you to receive Christ today. Simply pray something like this.

Jesus, I do believe that You are the Son of God, and that You came and died for the sins of the world. I believe that You were raised from the dead. I ask You to come into my life and to forgive me of my sins. I confess You as my Lord today, and I want to follow You. Lord, help me to know Your love so that I can love others, just as You love us. Amen.

If you prayed to receive Christ today, tell your pastor. Tell your friends that you have received Christ. You have just embarked on a remarkable journey.

Our second application is for those who have received Christ, but have struggled with loving others. Based on this passage, I want to exhort you to make it your goal to love others. Keep trying and making efforts. Our love for others is perfected and it matures when we practice loving others. You may not be where you want to be, but be persistent. Ask the Lord to help you learn to love others. Let me also encourage you to memorize 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and to meditate on each characteristic of love. Look for ways to apply these characteristics in your relationships with others.

Our third application is for those who are not in a local church. You are not in fellowship with others for one reason or another. God does not want you to forsake the assembling of the saints, as is the habit of some today. He wants you in fellowship with others, and to learn to love others. The best place to learn this is in the local church, and in particular, in a small group. Join a Sunday school class, cell group, life group, women's group, or men's group. Ask God to help you learn to love others. That is a prayer that God will bless and answer.

As we come to a close this morning, let me encourage each and every one of you to love one another.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for your unconditional, perfect, sacrificial love for us. Thank You for loving us so much that You sent Jesus to die for our sins so that we could be forgiven and have fellowship with You. Jesus, thank You for showing us the greatest love of all, laying your life down for us. Father, help us to love one another. Help us to grow and mature in our love; help us to be perfected in our love. Holy Spirit, I ask You to help us love others. Alert us to opportunities and ways that we can love others. I pray that our lives will be witnesses to others that we are Your disciples. Help us love one another. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- How does loving our brother mature or perfect our love?
- What are some of the biggest hindrances to loving one another? What are some ways to overcome these things so that we increase and abound in love for one another?
- How do you define agape love in your own words?
- As you reflect on your life, what is an aspect of God's love that you have grown in? What is an aspect of God's love that you need to grow more in?
- How does a perfect love cast out fear of judgment and punishment?
- What example of God's love stands out to you the most?
- Has there been someone in your life that has modeled God's love for you?
- What is one takeaway from the message today that has stood out?

Love One Another (1 Jn 4:7-21)

Introduction (1 Jn 4:7–21)

1. **Because it is the mark of a believer** (1 Jn 4:7-8, 1 Jn 5:13, Jn 13:34-35, 1 Co 13:1–13, Eph 3:14–19, 1 Cor 14:1, 16:14, 2 Cor 5:14, 8:8, Gal 5:13, Php 1:9, Col 3:14)
2. **Because of God’s example** (1 Jn 4:9-11, Jn 15:13, Ro 5:8, Jn 13:15, 13:34-35, Eph 5:25)
3. **Because it is how we abide in Christ** (1 Jn 4:12-16, Jn 14:23, Ro 8:9–11, Jn 15:9-10, 1 Jn 2:6, 3:6, 3:24)
4. **Because it is how we are perfected in love** (1 Jn 4:12, 4:16-21, Jn 19:30, Col 1:28-29, Jn 5:24, Php 1:21-24, Jn 13:1–3, 16:28, Ro 8:34, Heb 13:17, Pr 9:10, 14:27, 16:6, Ps 25:14, 31:19)

Conclusion and Applications