

## Relying on the Love of God

“God is love” as we ponder this statement for a few minutes, we realize it is bursting with meaning and understanding. What we will see in our study today are these simple words and are at the base or foundation of more than we ever imagined and “relying on the love of God” may become your passion if it isn’t already. Let’s read our scripture for this study:

### **1 John 4:7-21**

*“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

*<sup>13</sup> This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> This 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. <sup>18</sup> There 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.*

*<sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> Whoever 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. <sup>21</sup> *And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister*".

One commentator has said that "*God is love*" "is the most daring statement that has ever been made in the human language. It is the very heart of the new testament and of the Christian Gospel". It is central to the Bible's message.

Although we first must answer this question, what is love? For some it may be that "butterflies in the tummy" feeling, (although emotions are good and can be wonderful) true love isn't emotions, set of feelings or affections. It truly is an important cultural conversation. In our culture God has been pushed out and marginalized and in our "post-Christian" era, "love" (as defined by this generation) has actually replaced the gospel and God. "Love" has arguably become the only true lasting universal religion or god in the west. We have chosen a new religion and that is the "religion of love" and what we are really saying is "love is God".

Love for John is people laying down their lives for others, ultimately seen in Jesus on the cross. (V-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*" John is telling us that God's love is the core message of the gospel.

"Love is a God who created you and likes you and loves you so much that in his own death he spends the life of his son to tell you he loves you". For John he says if you want to know true love look straight at the cross, you will see it clearly in what Jesus did for us...Love is not God, but God is love.

### **1) God's Love is in us**

John always describes God's love as being right here and right now, not in distant terms; it's near to us. John's language is that God's love comes down from heaven, is among us, God's love lives in us. In our culture we might say it's "locally sourced". It is not out there, as we read our passage; "*God lives in us and his love is made complete in us*". His love is in us, we don't have to search it out or earn it and we can't love others without it. There is no consumerism here, because his love comes near to us and then we extend ourselves to others. We are changed by what comes to us

and then we go out and work out that love of God among other people. John would say to us today, (brace yourself) if you are not loving people around you (brothers and sisters, neighbors) then you haven't come to know God's love yet. Make no mistake we don't work for the love of God, we workout the love of God in our lives. "We don't love people to be loved by God, we are loved by God that's why we love people". When we get around to loving those around us, we are not loving them with our own love.

Learning how to love people is not something you just wake up one morning and do. It is the response of you already being loved, you can't pass on love if you haven't already received it.

A.J. told the story of his 5-year-old son wanting to mow the lawn with him. They both have their hands on the push bars, but it is obviously the Dad who is doing the work and all would stop if he didn't push. So it is with us and God's love, (mowing the lawn). It is not your strength, it is your *participation in his strength* that gets the job done. We need to rely on God to love people; it is *only you participating in God's love*. It's easy to rely on everything else other than God's love.

"Ultimately our ability to love others is directly related to your ability to receive God's love"

"God never works against us or without us" (He loves working with us)

We need to be "readers", we are the most informed culture ever. Yet there is a crisis going on around us; there is zero connection between input of information and joy and maturity in your walk.

Paul must have been looking forward when he described the last days; 'forever learners but never able to acknowledge the truth'

We have become addicts to "interesting", we like "blowing people out of the water". Pastor's feel this pressure and neglect the shepherding call.

The path to becoming like Jesus is not one more book or podcast, but relying on the love of God. We are drowning in information but dying of thirst for God's love. Don't seek after "interesting" but seek Jesus and Gods love. "Is being loved by God not interesting enough for you?" This is how

Jesus lived; the two times that Jesus hears God's voice, he affirmed that he was his son and loved him. "This is my son in whom I am well pleased" (He knew his Father loved him)

## **2) God's Love is Among us**

Verse 17, says that God's love is made complete among us. It is not saying God's love is not complete, not better, it is complete in itself. God himself is love, it doesn't depend on anything else, it is perfect in him. John is saying, God is giving us love and we are called to take that love and fulfill that love among us. We live that love with each other, in our neighborhoods, schools, etc. It completes us, he's not made complete in our love we are made complete in his.

All of us have an "if". What is it you think in your mind and heart, "if I get this", (fill in the blank) "I would be complete". Maybe a better job, more pay, marriage, children, divorce, (married to someone else), more kids, a kid, good kids, less kids, one good kid, no kids, better sex life, travel more...I would be complete. Only one thing makes us complete, we are complete in the love of God.

The Prophet Amos looked forward to our time describing a people going here and there looking for your security and your life (Coast to coast) in these things, (your job, your sex life, etc.) but will not find it, but nothing will fulfill us but the love of God. Sin is trying to find your ultimate fulfillment in anything other than God, even "good" things. The ultimate fulfillment in our lives cannot be found without the love of God.

Eugene Peterson was asked, "what is the mark to being the most Christian in the world"? He answered; *"The greatest way I learned over the years to be a mature Christian is simple be in a church for 50 years"* Be in a place where you have to work out the love of God.

## **3) God's Love is for us**

He is not against us, he's not against us/you! John can't finish a paragraph without talking about God's love and without looking at the

cross. This cross is very dramatic, which tells us that God is not quiet or passive with and about his love for us.

John closes with this invitation, in this world we are “like Jesus”. He doesn’t say we are Jesus, but that we begin to live like Jesus and pour ourselves out for a world that needs Jesus so badly. Like Jesus, the world will hate you and maybe like Jesus will kill you but you keep loving.

C.S. Lewis said in his book the “Four loves”

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.”

— **C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves**

## **Discussion Questions**

- 1) A.J. talks to us about the “love of God”. What comes to your mind, or out of your experience, about the love of God?
- 2) Looking at page 2 of the notes, we realize that we must first define what love is. First, how does our current culture define love? Looking at the 1 John passage, how does God define love?
- 3) Review the section above on “God’s love is in us.” What part stuck out for you?
- 4) Next let’s look again at the second section, “God’s love is among us,” especially verse 17. What is your “if” in the past, or maybe even now, that answers the question; “if I get this, (fill in the blank) I would be complete?”

5) Lastly, glance again over the third point, “God’s love is for us” and share what you received from it. Don’t pass on reading the C.S. Lewis quote about the pain we will experience...like Jesus.