

The Epistles of John

Week 36: 1 John 4:7-19

What's the great commandment?

“Love God with your whole heart, soul,
mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as
yourself.”

Ben Witherington III

1 John 4:7-19

1 John 4:7-12 (ESV)

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

10 In this is love, not that we have 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 ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:7-19

Right at the heart of knowing God is loving.

This passage repeats itself and also earlier passages. This story has something to say about repeating:

In 1992–93 my family lived in Nairobi, Kenya, while I taught at a Christian college in the city. I regularly attended chapel and quickly noticed that songs were sung with great conviction. They were also repeated—a lot! The same stanzas and choruses would be repeated over and over. I asked why this was so. The answer: “Repeating is good.”

If you read the Psalms, you find that John is not the only place where repetition is used intentionally.

1 John 4:7-19

The verb to love (agapaō) is used twenty-eight times in 1 John, and eighteen of those occurrences are in vs 7-19. Additionally, the noun love (agapē) is employed thirteen times here, with an additional five occurrences in the rest of the letter. Clearly, love is a central theme in these verses.

Verses 7 and 11 put forth the basic concepts: **God is the source of love, and believers are to love one another**

In verse 9, the word (monogenēs), is translated as 'only' or in some other translations rendered 'only begotten'. The word is correctly translated in the NIV as 'one and only'

1 John 4:7-19

I think some of the commentaries completely miss the point of the phrase “no one has ever seen God”. Two examples:

We love people in our physical existence because we see them, we associate with them, and for some reason, we come to love them. John reminds us that this is a different kind of love. No one has ever seen God. How can we love someone whom we have not seen?

How, then, is it possible for us to love God whom we have not seen? We love him because He has expressed his love to us through the gift of his Son. When we recognize the world that God has created and the wonderful blessings that come from him, this should produce in us a love for the Father.

1 John 4:7-19

Placing this phrase in the context of the surrounding verses makes it obvious that John is telling us that no one has seen God, but they can see God's love through us by the way we love.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

We show God to those who do not know him by showing his love.

1 John 4:7-19

1 John 4:13–16 (ESV)

13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because 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 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

1 John 4:7-19

In verse 13 John tells us that He has given us of his Spirit. He dwells within us, and this testifies that God loves us and that God lives in us.

In verses 14–15 this point begins with the emphatic *kai hēmeis*, which the ESV understates as ‘And we’. A more accurate nuance might be ‘**As for us, we**’ indicating distinction of we from others. This same expression is used in verse 16, where the author emphasizes the community’s awareness of the love that God has for them. The presence of this emphatic expression likely is intentionally employed to remind the readers how they differ from the separatists.

Verse 16a then would read, *As for us, we have known and believe and still know and believe the love that God has in our midst.*

In the entire NT, Jesus is described as the Savior of the world only here in verse 14 and in John 4:42

1 John 4:7-19

1 John 4:17-19 (ESV)

17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for 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. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

19 We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:7-19

He says, “There is no fear in love. Indeed, the perfect love of God,” which inhabits the spirit of the believer, “drives out all fear”—casts out all fear —“because fear of that kind has to do with future consequences and punishment. The one who fears”—and I would say, makes fear-based decisions about their life—“has not yet been made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.”

The Greek wording behind Fear has to do with punishment. 1 John 4:18 is another example of the author’s obscure use of Greek. Literally, it reads, Fear has punishment.

Application for This Week

We have three applications this week:

Love is a critical and core essence of God, which means it must also be a core part of those of us who follow God.

We represent the God who no one has seen by the love we show to each other and to the world.

Love and fear can not co-exist. Fear is cast out, replaced, overcome by love.

Homework

My blog with past lessons is:

www.UnapologeticallyJohn.com

Thank you for coming!

See you back next week