



“A Different Kind of Love”

Part 2: “Man’s Love for God”

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1 John 4:7-21 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, 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 has been 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 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

There is a line in the movie “*Dream for an Insomniac*” that says “Unless it’s mad, passionate, extraordinary love, it’s a waste of your time. There are too many mediocre things in life. Love shouldn’t be one of them.”

Last time we met over this subject, I spoke to you concerning God’s love for mankind. We spoke of some of the blatant differences as well as the some of the nuances of the contrast between the agape love of God and the love found exercised in the world at large. I told you then about the world’s version of love, wherein the *self* is the recipient of all the benefits, the receiver of all its attributes, and the litmus test of its quality. With Biblical love however, the giver is not the recipient, but rather others...as God pours out a love upon us that the world does not know nor does it understand. Because *we* fail to truly understand what that love looks like, acts like, and differs from that of the world, we so often fail to see it even while it is all around us.

I spoke of God’s love exercised toward His creation... a “love” that is unrestricted and unconditional. There is nothing we have done to earn it or deserve it. It is all-encompassing, sacrificial, steadfast, unmovable and imminently personal. It is so far above the world’s version that they can’t really stand on the same stage. Agape is perfectly manifested parental love. The love of a Creator. The eternal declaration of a loving Father.

For many of us...*however glorious that is*, that is where it stops. We are indeed the “receivers” in the relationship. We bask in language like grace, forgiveness, blessing, and care. Yet we fail to follow through...we fail to realize that the manifest of God’s love in us...the “proof” that we understand and receive His love in righteousness, is that we reflect back that very love like a living mirror.

Most people desire an extraordinary love. They want a head-over-heels, once-in-a-lifetime relationship that is both passionate and enduring. Hit movies, best-selling novels, and dating websites all bank on our hope for a great romance.

However, the greatest love wasn’t born in a movie or a classic novel; it was authored by God himself when he created you in his image. His singular desire has always been a passionate, enduring relationship with you. Like us, God wants nothing less than the greatest love story.

We know that first, our initial love is manifest in the act of receiving him. That means, we take him as both our Savior and as our Lord. We ask him to forgive our sins **and take charge of our life**. This is our rebirth and we enter into a spiritual relationship with him. Jesus says in John 14:17 & 23 that if anyone loves him, he will actually come and live in them in the power of his Holy Spirit.

Next, we seek to grow in appreciation of him. This is crucial because salvation is “have been saved, (2 Tim 1:9), being saved (1 Cor 1:18) , as well as ‘shall be saved.’ (Rom 5:9-10). ” This process means recognizing how much we need him, and what a life with Him in the driver’s seat actually looks like. Many of us at some point speak some version of the “sinner’s pray” and that’s the beginning and the end of it. But loving Him means actually living every day in the reality and acknowledgement that without Him, we are lost. Eternally and in this life too. It is growing in our understanding of this love we are talking about herein. What it looks like, how it is manifested, and its innate reciprocal relationship.

Then, we *live Him* and *love Him outwards*. He comes to us to bringing his strength and power. We don’t have the ability to keep God’s commandments or live the life that we ought to live. But Jesus has promised to fill us with Himself and empower us to live and love as He lives and loves. But we must actually *let Him*. When we struggle for control of our lives...we when preempt His calling and mission for us... we when attempt to enlist His power for our own plans, we fail to righteously express God outwards to a dying world and fail to reciprocate that love back to Him. This is the difference between the world’s version of love and His version!

God’s love has shown that we have the highest place in His affections. Loving in kind...loving in response is to give Jesus the highest place in our affections. We most often look for hope, excitement and pleasure from the things of this world: our possessions, our work, our family, our football team and so on. Treasuring Jesus means that instead we pin all our hopes on him for our happiness and well-being. He is the only one who will never let us down. Only He has the power to help us in every situation. Only He has the wisdom to guide us through life. He is the only one who is truly worthy of our love and devotion.

As Jesus takes hold of our hearts, and our love for him grows, this will result in gratitude welling up in our hearts to God. What a God He is to have given us such a Savior! We will want to praise God, and give Him thanks that he has gone to such lengths to love people like us. This is why God’s people meet together regularly, not only to hear from God when the bible is preached, but also to worship God. We gather, because we are in love!

As we fall more and more in love with Christ, it positively affects our desires and emotions. When we truly love, that love always shows itself outwardly. So it is when we love Jesus! Perhaps that is the ultimate test of whether we really ARE in love or whether we are just in lust, in desire, in want, or in need. In our text and the whole of 1 John...the *apostle of love*, he wrote describing several of the outwards ways in which we demonstrate our love for God.

#1. We have an increasing desire for fellowship with God and one another. (1 John 1:6-7).

The more we treasure Christ in our lives, the more time we will want to spend with him and with his bride...His people, His church, and the less time we will want to spend in places and activities where Jesus is not known. The best way to cultivate knowledge and fellowship with Jesus and his people is by committing to a church community, and meeting regularly together. Any real mission for Him will have in it the priority of bringing others to Jesus as Andrew did in the gospels, and will want them to meet and know His bride the church.

#2. We have an increasing desire to keep God’s commandments.

1 John 5:3 “*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*” When we really understand how much God loves us, we realize that God has our good and our joy in mind, and that He isn’t going to command us to do anything which won’t ultimately be good for us. We are obedient not just because we are commanded to do so, but because we increasingly *want* to because our trust, our hope, and our faith is in Him and that He has our backs.

#3. We have increasing confidence in prayer.

1 John 5:14 “*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*” The more we actually experience God’s love, the more we will be sure that he hears us and answers us when we pray. We will trust him to answer us in the way that he thinks is best (which might often be different from what we think is best!)

#4. We get ‘into the game.’

1 John 2:6. Our desire will be to engage in God’s presence and God’s kingdom pursuits. We want to tell others about the one we love and He who loves us so. We naturally express our love by our physical proximity to the one we love as well as His interests. We are, **where He is**. We manifest His presence and love, and **He** manifests His presence and love. We serve Him and others.

#5. We have an increasingly active love for other people, especially other Christians.

1 John 4:7 “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*” The more we know of God’s love, the more we want to share it. The more we see of the lengths that God has gone to to love us, the greater the lengths we will go to to demonstrate practically that love to other people. (More on this next week.)

All of these things are not a matter of effort and striving. Certainly discipline and work are indeed a part of the Christian faith, but when one is in love, loving back is easy. His ‘yoke becomes easy’ and ‘His burden becomes light.’ We are compelled. We are consumed. We are “in love.”

An “all in” kind of love is the sum of the little choices we make each day. Gary Chapman, author of *The Five Love Languages*, said, “Our most basic emotional need is not to fall in love. It’s to be genuinely loved by another, to know a love that grows out of reason and choice, not instinct. I need to be loved by someone who chooses to love me, who sees in me something worth loving.”

The sum of this issue is the resonate of our living in HIS love. The reflection of our love for God. We can begin by simply asking ourselves, *How do I hope to be loved?* You already have what it takes to create an extraordinary relationship with God. It begins with time and movement, not merely feelings and thoughts.

God has a single expectation for a relationship with you. And the greatest passage in scripture for this issue is Mark 12:30...a passage so divine and dynamic in that it so declares the standing of every soul and lays out our true priorities and position.

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” We must recognize that God’s love to us requires a response. He makes it very clear that he wants “all” of you. He wants all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength invested in your relationship with him. More than anything, he craves a relationship in which you are “all in.”

Love him with all your heart. Loving God with all your heart means reserving the best of your affection for him. Making time each day to build an intimate relationship with him through conversation. He wants to know you and be known by you.

Share your joys with Him. Run to him first with your news of life events. Thank Him always for the breath of life and His care. Talk to Him about your private hopes. Boost him up to others. Be humble and vulnerable before Him. Seek His honest evaluation of your living and respond accordingly.

But also talk to him first when you’re feeling down. Cry to him when you’re overwhelmed. Admit to Him your failures, shortcomings and weaknesses. Be honest when you’re disappointed or angry—even if it’s him you’re angry with. Share your secret fears. Apologize when you’ve made a mistake. Ask him for forgiveness. Seek true evaluation of your living,

even your ministry endeavors. Request His infilling presence and the power to overcome and to move...even if it is against your fleshly desires and earthly judgements.

Then let *him* talk. He has things to say, and he wants a relationship that goes both ways. Ask for his advice and seek out his answer. Listen to his word's and stories in the Bible. Hear out people who speak his truth. Notice the gifts he has provided for you. Be honest about yourself. Get to know Him more and more.

Love with All Your Soul. This speaks of dedicating your life to him. Begin by asking him, "How do you want me to spend my time, energy, money, and talents? What can I do with my resources to honor you?"

Find out what God values and stay true to those things. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." If you are truly open to it, He will show you how to live in a way that pleases him. Be ready though. He may ask you to shift your spending habits from self-indulgence to kingdom pursuits. He might encourage you to change your attitude toward work or school. He will no doubt ask you to find a community who supports your relationship with him and will even press you on hard-to-hear stuff. He'll definitely urge you to forgive and love people the way he forgives and loves you.

Love with All Your Mind

Loving God with all your mind means backing up your passion with knowledge. Benjamin Franklin has been credited with saying, "If passion drives you, let reason hold the reins." God understands that the mind and heart are linked. He wants you to use your reasoning to understand and love him more fully.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. I've found that God welcomes genuine curiosity and dialogue. In fact, he hopes for it. But then actually seek his answers! Read the Bible and find out what the words mean. Listen to the experiences of others. Take a class. Ask him for guidance. Make an effort to find out who he is. Discover what he likes and what he dislikes.

Loving God with all your mind also means directing your thoughts to valuable things. When you focus on hope and love instead of fear and hate, your heart and actions follow. Philippians 4:8 says, "Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise."

Love with All Your Strength. That means persevering for him every day. To what lengths will you go for the one you love? Poet Bayard Taylor once said, "The loving are the daring." Indeed, genuine love demands strength and courage like nothing else.

This means that the call to love God is not only with our physical muscle, *but with everything we have available for honoring God* — which includes our spouse, our children, our house or dorm room, our pets and wardrobe and tools and cell phones and movies and music and computers and time.

It means you must muster your resources to protect your relationship with God every single day. It means you're willing to change and sacrifice things to have him. It means being honest, and sometimes it means doing the unpopular thing. It means listening to truth and holding yourself accountable. Each day, be willing to fight for your relationship with God. Because the world is fighting to get you to do otherwise.

Lastly, know this today. God's love for you alone will not gain you eternal life nor quality in the one you have now. For Moses asserted that God "keeps covenant and steadfast love with *those who love him* and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations," but he "repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them" (Deuteronomy 7:9–10). Similarly, Paul declared that "all things work together for good" only for "*those who love God . . . who are called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28).

This means that the covenant love we're called to must be a wholehearted, life-encompassing, community-impacting, exclusive commitment to our God. He loves you with everything. He seeks the same in return...