

"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."

I John 4:16 NKJV



### The Uniqueness of the God-like Love

The abuses of the concept of love by many in the religious world have been so frequent and so gross that many of us are tempted to say, "Yes, but ..." anytime we hear the subject mentioned. How unfortunate this is, for all of us realize that true love is the basis of faithful service to God. Love for God is the first and greatest commandment, but one "like it" is that we love our neighbor. An interesting but most demanding analysis of this principle is set forth in 1 John 4.7-21. Verses 7 and 21 of this reading show that the point in this passage is that Christians are to love each other. The pattern for this love is that which God has already shown us.

John affirms two features of the love God has already show to us. In verse 9 he says, *Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten son in to the world that we might live through him.*" God's love is such that He gave the most precious gift He had in order to redeem us. Form a human standpoint the Father's gift even surpassed the Son's. What parent would not find it easier to face death personally rather than to stand by while his child died? God, the Father, made this supreme sacrifice.

In verse 10 John continues, *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* God loved us *first*. We had done and could do nothing to merit this gift. Paul develops this same thought in Romans 5.8, "But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

## Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.  
Jacksonville, FL 32220

### Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Classes / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

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The two great expressions of God's love for us should motivate us to love Him in return. However, this is not the point in 1 John 4. John applies the argument in verse 11; "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" This passage is not teaching us to love God; it is teaching us to love each other. God's love is introduced as the pattern for our love for brethren.

Reciprocal love is a desirable quality. However, reciprocal love is not unique. Jesus argued that even sinners "love those who love them" (Luke 6.32). Christians should love God because of what He has already done. Likewise, they should love parents, brethren, friends or others who render service and help to them. However, if Christians show love only in return, they miss the real point of 1 John 4 and the joy of the God-like spirit of love. Our love *for each other* is to be after the pattern of *His love for us* (verse 11).

How can Christians demonstrate the unique, God-like love? By doing for others the kinds of things God has done for them. First, by acting generously. God gave generously — His only Son — His most precious possession. We should be liberal with our goods to those in need. "Faith without works is dead" is not really discussing belief in Jesus without baptism. The principle may be suited, but the topic under discussion in James 2 was benevolence! Seeing a brother in need, "wishing him well" while withholding aid one could give is described as "dead faith." The generosity of the Macedonians became a pattern and a challenge for the Corinthians. Giving is quite common. Real liberality is unique.

Unfortunately, Christians sometimes (often?) react in a world-like manner rather than in a God-like manner and consider themselves justified because of the treatment they have received from the other brethren. Not infrequently, Christians "hold grudges" against other brethren for years because of earlier injustices. The Scriptures demand that we show benevolence regardless of the behavior of the other and that we not wait "until he does it first." Sometimes brethren are heard to say, "I would be nice to him," or "I'd forgive him *if he would do it first.*"

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This is exactly the opposite of what God has done for us and it is the opposite of what He expects and demands of His own.

John further reasons that no one has seen God at anytime but "if we love on another" the world will see Him in us (verses 12 and 17). Why? Because the God-like love is truly unique. It is not of the world or like the world. It is generous but it is also unselfish. God-like love is expressed first. If necessary, it is expressed solely. It does not ask, "You go first." It gives, it forgives, it acts because it is right and good to do so. After all, that's the way God has acted, isn't it?

Written by; Bob F. Owen

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