

1 John 4:11 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another:

Greek - Agaphetoi ei houtos ho theos egaphesen (3SAAI) hemas kai hemeis opheilomen (1PPAI) allelous agapan (PAN).

Amplified - Beloved, if God loved us so [very much], we also ought to love one another.

Wuest - Divinely-loved ones, since in that manner and to that extent did God love us, also, as for us, we are under moral obligation to be constantly loving one another.

NLT - Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

Beloved, if God so loved us

- 1Jn 3:16,17,23 Mt 18:32,33 Lu 10:37 John 13:34 15:12,13 2Co 8:8,9 Eph 4:31,32 5:1,2 Col 3:13
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

OUR MORAL OBLIGATION TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Beloved - This is John's last use of this tender adjective in this epistle (1 John 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11). This is the last passage directly addressed to his readers until the very last verse of the letter where he calls them "little children." (1Jn 5:21)

Beloved (27)(**agapetos** from **agapao** = to love, **agape** = unconditional love borne by Spirit - Gal 5:22-note) means beloved, dear, very much loved. **Agapetos** describes the love of another, this love being called out of the "giver's" heart by preciousness of the recipient of the love (the "beloved") and is used only of Christians. John is addressing believers with a tender word of exhortation to fulfill our obligation to love one another. It's easy to call someone a tender name, but John clearly practiced what he preached. His life matched his lips. His behavior was in harmony with his words. **Could we say the same, beloved?**

If - A conditional statement. This subordinating conjunction introduces a first class conditional statement, assumed to be true or to describe a fulfilled condition (God did so love us). One could translate it "**In view of the fact that**" or "**since** God so loved us." (like the NLT). As **Wuest** says "since in that manner and to that extent did God love us."

If God so loved us - The word "**so**" refers to 1Jn 4:10 in which God sending His Son which explains how God **so loved us**. Since He loved us by sacrificially giving His Son, His Best, we who have His nature are morally obligated to do the same! His great love for us should MOTIVATE a grateful heart in us to dispense His love to others.

Ironside reminds us that God "did not wait for us to love Him first; He did not wait for us to behave ourselves before loving us, but "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8-note). God loved us when there was nothing lovable about us. God loved us when we were at enmity against Him, "alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds." (Colossians 1:21-note). God loved us when our desires were contrary to His desires, when we were trampling His Word beneath our feet, spurning His grace, and breaking His commandments."

John's point is that if God loved us with such a great love when we were by all human measures, quite unlovable, then we have a debt to love others with this divine, Spirit enabled love (even when they too might not be very "lovable" humanly speaking!)

Wuest on **if God so love us** - It was an act of infinite love and infinite sacrifice, not only on the part of the Son on the Cross, but on the part of the Father who sent the Son, for the heart of the Father was pierced when sin was laid on the Son at the Cross and His holiness demanded that He abandon the Son (Zech. 12:10). In the same manner, to the same extent, John says that the saints have a moral obligation to be constantly loving one another. The infinitive "to love" is present tense in Greek, speaking of continuous action. ([Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

God so loved us - God's love is: spontaneous in its **source**; universal in **scope**; long-suffering in **intensity**; self-sacrificing in **character**; aggressive in **action**; and constant in **duration**. (W Griffith-Thomas)

Ironside reminds us - We remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?" (Mt 5:46-note) Even the most corrupt people in the world love those who seem to give them some return for their affection. But the great principle laid down here is that after we have been born of God and are partakers of the divine nature (2Pe 1:4), we will not wait for people to love us, but will love them no matter how they behave. That is divine love demonstrated through the new nature. This kind of love is a challenge even to Christians, because we still have the old nature in us. Though born of God (1Jn 4:7, 5:1, 4, 18), the Christian has a nature that came from fallen Adam (**Ed**: See **sarx** or "**flesh**"), and that nature is selfish and is looking for satisfaction in others and in the things of this world. It is only through the power of the new, divine nature inherited at the second birth, that the Christian can rise to the standard set before him (**Ed**: cp Php 2:13NLT-note). "Beloved, if God so loved us, **we ought** also to love one another." I like that word, **ought**. It suggests duty. Sometimes Christians do not like to be reminded of duty, for they have an idea that **duty** is not consistent with **grace**. But the grace of God, when it is active in the life, leads (and empowers) men and women to do the things they **ought**. Here is one thing we **ought** to do-we **ought** to love one another. **We ought** to love those who do not love us, who mistreat us, who speak evil of us, who harm us, and who would ruin us if they could. That is the way God loves us. Nothing that men did to our blessed Lord Jesus, nothing that

they said about Him, could change the attitude of His heart toward them. As He was hanging on the Cross and the angry rabble cried out for His life, He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). **This is not natural love. No one loves like this naturally. This is divine, spiritual love, and is possible only by walking in the power of the new nature** (Gal 5:16-note, Eph 5:18-note), **which God gives to those who believe.** ([1 John 4 Commentary - Ironside's Notes on Selected Books](#))

Guzik - If you had a pipe that was clogged - water kept going into it, but never came out, that pipe would be useless. You would replace it. Just so, God puts His love into our lives that it might flow out. We want the Lord to clear us and fill us so that His love can flow through us. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

Spurgeon - If such was his great kindness toward us that he denied himself his own Son for our sake, ought we not to be kindly affectioned one toward another? Here we have a fact and an argument. We ought to love. We ought to love after God's fashion; not because men loved us. Nor because they deserve anything at our hands. We are too apt to look at the worthiness of those whom we help; but our God is gracious to the unthankful and to the evil. He makes his sun to rise and rain to fall for the unjust as well as for the righteous, therefore we ought to love the unlovely and the unloving. But just as God has a special love for his own people, we who believe in him ought to have a peculiar affection for all who are his.

NET Note - God's act of love in sending his Son into the world to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1Jn 4:10) ought to motivate us as believers to love one another in a similar sacrificial fashion. The author made the same point already in 1 John 3:16. But this failure to show love for fellow believers is just what the opponents are doing: In 1 John 3:17 the author charged them with refusing to love their brothers by withholding needed material assistance. By their failure to love the brothers sacrificially according to the example Jesus set for believers, the opponents have demonstrated again the falsity of their claims to love God and know God (see 1 John 2:9).

John now repeats the call with which he began this section "Beloved, let us love one another" (1Jn 4:7note)

Hiebert on we also ought - The verb "**we ought**" (opheilomen) denotes not the "must" of external compulsion but the inner constraint of conscious obligation. (Cf. 1Jn 2:6-note; 1Jn 3:16-note.) **Jackman** remarks, 'This is not just an extra ingredient that we might add to our discipleship if we feel especially moved to do so. We owe it to the loving Father not to slander His name any further by denying His love in our human relations... If we have appreciated something of the infinite price paid for our redemption, then we shall see at once how vital it is that we do not continue to indulge ourselves in sin.' God's love for us is the example as well as the stimulus for our practice of mutual love. The reality of our love for God will be tested, strengthened, and purified by our practice of mutual love as believers. In keeping with the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 22:37-40), John insists that love for God and love for our brother cannot be separated." ([The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary](#)) (See also related journal article - [1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent](#))

we also ought to love one another

GOD SO LOVED US...

SO...

We... ought ([3784](#)) (**opheilo** from **ophéillo** = heap up) means we are bound by a moral obligation to love. This verb means to owe something to someone and literally speaks of financial indebtedness = to owe money, be in debt, describing that which is due (Mt 18:28, Lk 7:41, 16:5, 7, Philemon 1:18). The verb **opheilo** was sometimes used to describe "the debt" itself. Figuratively, **opheilo** describes a sense of indebtedness to someone for something - while we "owe" God, our loving is never to be viewed as an attempt to "pay Him" back, for just as we could never earn our salvation and with it our ability to love, we can never pay Him back because the cost to Him was of infinite value - His precious Son! The costliness of the Father's love should motivate a Spirit enabled love in us for others!

Opheilo was used to describe owing good will (1Co 7:3), love (Ro 13:8note = we can never love enough and will always "owe" this debt).

The **present tense** signifies this is a believer's continual **moral obligation**. The implication is since this love is something we are obligated to show to one another, it is clearly a quality of love God enables in us to accomplish. **How? By His Spirit. Are you filled with His Spirit** (Eph 5:18-note), **walking in His Spirit** (Gal 5:16-note), **being led by His Spirit** (Gal 5:18-note)? If you are, then agape love should be a natural outflow (Gal 5:22-note - love = **agape**)! There is no other way except by the Spirit's power! Yield to Him today, that Christ's life might flow freely through you!

Opheilo is used 3x in First John, each time identifying our moral obligation to submit to the Spirit for some supernatural endeavor...

1John 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

1John 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Guzik - When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, and showed such great love and servanthood to them, we might have expected Him to conclude by gesturing to His own feet and asking who among them was going to do to Him what He had just done for them. Instead, Jesus said: If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet (John 13:14). The proper way to love God in response to His love for us is to go out and love one another.

Piper on we ought - when he says, "We ought to love each other," he means ought the way fish ought to swim in water and birds ought to fly in the air and living creatures ought to breathe and peaches ought to be sweet and lemons ought to be sour and hyenas ought to laugh. And born again people ought to love. It's who we are. This is not mere imitation. For the children of God, imitation becomes realization. We are realizing who we are when we love. God's seed is in us. God's Spirit is in us. God's nature is in us. God's love is being perfected in us. God's Christ-Sending Love As Our Internal Impulse. Yes, there is the external impulse of seeing in history the Son of God laying down his life for us and constraining us in this way. But what's unique about the Christian life is that there is also the internal impulse that comes from being born again and having the very love that sent the Son into the world pulsing through our souls by the life of God within. The new birth enables us to experience the manifestation of God's love in history as an internal reality of God's Spirit within us. ([1 John 4:7-21 The New Birth Produces Love](#))

Spurgeon emphasizes that love for one another is practical - Has anybody offended you? Seek reconciliation. 'Oh, but I am the offended party.' So was God, and he went straight away and sought reconciliation. Brother, do the same. 'Oh, but I have been insulted.' Just so: so was God: all the wrong was towards him, yet he sent. 'Oh, but the party is so unworthy.' So are you; but 'God loved you and sent his Son.' Go write according to that copy.

Love one another - This phrase occurs 3 times in this "love" section (1Jn 4:7-21) - 1Jn 4:7-note, 1Jn 4:11-note, 1Jn 4:12-note. It was also used in 1Jn 3:11-note and 1Jn 3:23-note.

To love (25)(agapao) "speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved." ([Wuest](#)) While this quality of love is not devoid of feeling, it does not depend upon feeling. We don't always feel like showing this love, but we are still call to do so.

Steven Cole - If everyone were easy to love, we wouldn't need this powerful example of God's love or this strong exhortation to love one another. The world loves those that love them. But Jesus commands us to love even our enemies (Mt. 5:43-47-note). Implicit in what John is saying here is that we must love those who may not be especially lovable or easy to love. If I may speak hypothetically (I'm sure that no one can relate to this!), you may have a mate that is self-centered and difficult to live with. John says, "Beloved, if God so loved you, you also ought to love that difficult mate." There may be people in this church whom you do not like. John says, "Beloved, if God so loved you, you also ought to love that difficult person." It is in these difficult situations that God's amazing love in Christ shines forth in us. If you're having trouble loving someone, remember that God loved you while you were yet a sinner. He sent His Son to a world that is filled with sin. If you are His child through the new birth, then you must be the channel for His love to flow to those who may not be very lovable. ([1 John 4:7-11 Why We Must Love](#))

Illustration of self-less love - During the Korean War a young Communist officer ordered the execution of a Christian civilian. When he learned that his prisoner was in charge of an orphanage and was doing much good in caring for small children, he decided to spare his life, but kill his son instead. The 19-year-old boy was shot in the presence of his father. Later, when the tide of events changed, this same officer was captured, tried, and condemned to death for war crimes. But before the sentence could be carried out, the Christian father pleaded for the life of this Communist who had killed his son. He admitted that if justice were followed, this man should be executed. But since he was so young and blindly idealistic, he probably thought that his actions were right. "Give him to me," he said, "and I'll teach him about the Savior." They granted the request. That father took the murderer of his son into his own home. As a result of his self-sacrificing love, that Communist became a Christian pastor ("Our Daily Bread," April, 1980).

The King's Colors - By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. —John 13:35 - In Thailand, the people greatly love and admire King Bhumibol (Rama IX), who has led them for over 60 years. To display their respect for the king, the Thai people wear bright yellow shirts every Monday, because yellow is the official color of the king.

As we seek to live for our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, we should also show our colors of allegiance and appreciation for all He has done for us. But how? What are the "colors" that declare to the world that we serve the King of kings and Lord of lords?

The night before His crucifixion, King Jesus told us what our “colors” should be when He said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). His disciple John echoed this when he wrote, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11).

When we display Christ’s love for our fellow believers, it is more than just kindness or care. It is one of the most tangible ways we can show our love and devotion for the Savior.

As we interact with fellow Christ-followers, let’s be sure to show our colors. That will honor our King before a watching world. By Bill Crowder

Teach me to love as Thou dost love,
And let the whole world know
That Jesus Christ lives in my heart,
His glorious light to show.

—Brandt

Our love for God shows in our love for others.

Linked Hearts - Each new day, it seems, brings new ways our family sees the body of Christ at work. One demonstration of the fellowship of Christians sits on my desk as I write.

It’s a basket overflowing with letters from people I have never met. Since the time Our Daily Bread readers first learned of the car accident that ushered our daughter Melissa into heaven 6 years ago, we’ve received hundreds of messages from our brothers and sisters in the faith.

They’ve said things such as: “I grieve with you, my brother, and I will keep you and your family in my prayers.” “I weep at your loss.” “I hurt with you.” Many recommended books to read. Others sent poems or articles of comfort and hope. Some shared their own stories of bereavement as we discovered new partners on the path of pain. They demonstrate the principle of love among the family of God that’s commanded in 1 John 4:11.

Each of those gracious notes is different from the others, but they contain a common thread: Because of our shared faith in Christ, I find my heart joined to the hearts of the writers of these messages.

Hearts linked by Jesus create a chain of love that can encourage even the most grieving heart. By Dave Branon

Bearing people’s heavy burdens,
Shouldering their pain and grief,
Shows the love of Christ to others,
Bringing them His sure relief.

—Sper

Our hearts are linked through the love of Christ.

The Murder Of Love - Our modern world has committed murder. By trying to live without God, it has killed love.

Millions today no longer look for satisfaction through a loving relationship with God and other people. Life revolves around themselves, and they are busy seeking their own fulfillment.

This fascination with self-interests has even invaded our Christian world, as a look at current bestselling books will show. An analysis by author James Hunter of the eight most prolific conservative religious publishers revealed that “87.8 percent of the titles dealt with subjects related to the self, its discovery and nurture, and the resolution of its problems and tensions. The remaining 12.2 percent of the titles had to carry the rest of the cargo.”

We who believe on Jesus Christ must beware lest we fall into the preoccupation with self that marks our culture. Our calling is to love with all our being the God who first loved us, and to love others as ourselves. This is the pathway to a joy-filled, satisfying life.

The New Testament letter of 1 John states, “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1Jn 4:8,11). Do our lives show that we know God? - By Herbert Vander Lugt

How sad when flames of love burn low
In hearts that once their warmth did know!
Yet Christ will freely grace bestow
And cause that love again to glow.
—DJD

Love for God will cause you to live for God.

A Fragrance - Katie nervously walked into the church youth group party that Linda had invited her to attend. She hadn't been to a church since she was a little girl and didn't know what to expect at a Valentine dinner with mostly strangers. But her heart started to calm when she found valentines at her plate that had been written for her from everyone there. They had cards for each other too, but it touched Katie's heart that they would think to do that for her, a visitor to their group.

Katie felt so welcomed that she accepted Linda's invitation to a church service. There she heard about God's love for her in spite of her sinfulness, and she embraced Jesus' forgiveness. The youth group had given her a fragrance of God's love, and God opened her heart to trust Him.

“If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another,” the apostle John said (1John 4:11). That's a love for our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as for those who don't yet know Him. Ray Stedman wrote, “As God's love shines into our hearts, we become more open to others, allowing the fragrance of love to drift out and attract those around us.” The youth group did that for Katie.

God can spread the fragrance of His love through us today. By Anne Cetas

Lord, I'm so thankful that because You first loved me,
I am able to love others. Please spread the sweet
fragrance of Your love through me to everyone
I interact with today. Amen.

A godly life is a fragrance that draws others to Christ.
(2Cor 2:14-16)

A Good Neighbor (Read: Luke 10:29-37) - In June 2011, when disastrous flood-waters chased residents of Minot, North Dakota, from their homes, the people of that community did what seemed to come naturally to them—they helped others who were in need. People from more than an hour away, without being asked, showed up to help. Some loaned their campers to those who lost their homes and others allowed their garages to be used for temporary storage. The people of North Dakota were showing what it means to be good neighbors.

As followers of Christ, being good neighbors—showing love to others—should come naturally to us as well (Matt. 22:39; John 13:35; 1John 4:7-11). Even though we may not have the opportunity to respond in a dramatic way to a natural disaster, we can all look for ways to love those around us. To be good neighbors, we can show others mercy (Luke 10:29-37), treat others fairly (Lev. 19:13-18; James 2:1-8), speak to others truthfully (Eph. 4:25-**note**), and forgive others completely (Eph. 4:32-**note**; Col. 3:13-**note**).

Christians can be the best neighbors around because our love for others flows out of the life of the ultimate neighbor—Jesus Christ—who loved and sacrificed His life for us. By Marvin Williams

Oh, to be like Him, tender and kind,
Gentle in spirit, lowly in mind;
More like to Jesus, day after day,
Filled with His Spirit now and away.

—Ellsworth

Our love for Christ is only as real as our love for our neighbor.

Cherished Connections - We, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. —Romans 12:5**note**

- When I heard that David was in the office for a board meeting, I was excited. He and I had a mutual friend, Sharon, who had died several years earlier. We had a few minutes to reminisce about her and her love for life and God. What a delight to connect with someone who has loved someone you have loved! There's a special bond because you love to talk about that cherished person.

Those who know Jesus Christ as their Savior have even stronger ties. We are forever connected to Him and to one another. "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another," Paul says in Romans 12:5. We've been "born of God," and we love those who are "begotten of Him" (1John 5:1-**note**).

When we get together with fellow believers, we have the opportunity to talk about the one we love—Christ—and of the love, forgiveness, and grace we have experienced in Him because of His death and resurrection (1Jn 4:9-10-**note**). At such times, we can encourage each other to continue to trust Him and spur one another on to be faithful in our walk with Him.

This coming Sunday and throughout the week, let's remind fellow believers of all that Jesus has done and of how truly wonderful He is. By Anne Cetas

We Christians have a kinship with
All others who believe,
And from that bond of faith and love
A mutual strength receive.
—Hess

The more you **love Jesus, the more you'll **talk** about Him.**

Loving God - Early in our marriage, I thought I knew the ultimate shortcut to my wife's heart. I arrived home one night with a bouquet of a dozen red roses behind my back. When I presented the flowers to Martie, she thanked me graciously, sniffed the flowers, and then took them into the kitchen. Not quite the response I had expected.

It was an introductory lesson in the reality that flowers are not my wife's primary language of love. While she appreciated the gesture, she was mentally calculating the cost of an expensive bouquet of flowers—a budget breaker for a young couple in seminary! And as I've discovered through the years, she is far more interested in my time and attention. When I devote myself to her in an uninterrupted and attentive way, that's when she really feels loved.

Did you ever wonder how God wants us to show that we love Him? We get a clue when we read, "He who loves God must love his brother also" (1John 4:21-**note**). It's that simple. One of the primary ways we show our love for God is by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we genuinely love each other, it brings pleasure to our heavenly Father.

So watch for opportunities to tell Jesus that you love Him. He's infinitely worth whatever it costs. By Joe Stowell

All those who say they love the Lord
But don't love one another,
Should question the relationship
They have with God the Father.
—Sper

To **show your love for God, **share** your love with others.**

Love One Another - Brandon Moody was attending his uncle D. L. Moody's church on Easter morning. The final scene in the impressive pageant was a depiction of Jesus' ascension into heaven. The actor who was playing Jesus was being hoisted by stagehands through an opening in the ceiling. But when he was halfway up, they lost their grip and down came the actor—thankfully uninjured. With amazing presence of mind, the actor said to the shocked congregation, "And one more thing. Love one another."

Love was so important to Jesus that He told His disciples shortly before His arrest and crucifixion, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another ... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). John, known as the disciple whom Jesus loved (and the man who recorded these words of Jesus), wrote much about love in his first letter. Several times in chapter 4, the apostle urged his fellow believers to "love one another" (1 John 4:7,11-12). No matter what is happening in our lives, let's make Jesus' commandment and John's exhortation our mission statement: "**Love one another.**" By Vernon C. Grounds

Lord, when I learn that someone is hurting,
Help me know what to do and to say;
Speak to my heart and give me compassion,
Let Your great love flow through me today.
—K. De Haan

A little love can make a big difference.

1 John 4:10 Commentary <> 1 John 4:12 Commentary