

1 John 4:12 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
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Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

| BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP | | BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP | |
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| Conditions of Fellowship | Cautions of Fellowship | Fellowship Characteristics | Fellowship Consequences |
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| Abiding in God's Light | | Abiding in God's Love | |
| Written in Ephesus | | | |
| circa 90 AD | | | |

From Talk Thru the Bible

1 John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us:

Greek - theon oudeis popote teteatai (3SRM/PI) ean agapomen (1PPAI) allelous o theos en hemin menei (3SPAI) kai e agape autou en hemin teteleiomene (RPP) estin (3SPAI) .

Amplified - No man has at any time [yet] seen God. But if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us!

NLT - No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full

expression in us.

Smalley - No one has ever seen God; but, if we love one another, God dwells in us and his love has been brought to completion in us. (Word Biblical Commentary)

Wuest - God in His essence no one has ever yet beheld, with the result that no one has the capacity to behold (Him). If we habitually are loving one another, God in us is abiding, and His love has been brought to its fulness in us, and exists in that state of fulness.

- **seen:** 1Jn 4:20 Ge 32:30 Ex 33:20 Nu 12:8 John 1:18 1Ti 1:17 6:16 Heb 11:27
- **love one another** - 1Jn 4:6 3:24
- **His love** - 1Jn 4:17,18 2:5 1Co 13:13
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE GREATEST EVIDENCE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD: LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER

Steven Cole expounds on this passage - At first glance, 1Jn 4:12 seems out of context. John has been discussing God's love for us and our love for one another. Then, somewhat abruptly, he states, "No one has seen God at any time." You wonder, "Why did he throw that in here? What does God's invisibility have to do with a discussion of love?" The same words occur in the prologue to John's Gospel (John 1:18): "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." But here, John continues, "if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." What does he mean? **He means that the unseen God, who was historically revealed in the incarnation of the Son, is now revealed by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit in His people when they love one another. It's an amazing thought!** People do not see God and they may not read the Bible, but they do see and read the lives of Christians. They read your Christian home. They read this church. They read you as you interact with others at work or at school. If they see a remarkable, other-worldly love in those places—especially if they see love when they would expect retaliation—they see God abiding in you. If they see anger, bitterness, verbal attacks, and hatred, then we are failing to "testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1Jn 4:14-note). A writer named **Caecilius** (ca. A.D. 210) said of the Christians, "They know one another by secret marks and signs, and they love one another almost before they know one another." The Greek writer, **Lucian** (ca. A.D. 120-200) said of the early church, "It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator [Jesus] has put it into their heads that they are all brethren." The church father, **Tertullian**, said, "It is our care for the helpless, our practice of lovingkindness, that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. 'Look,' they say, '**How they love one another! Look how they are prepared to die for one another!**'" I wonder how often outsiders would describe modern Christians like that? John's point (in 1Jn 4:12) is that if we see God's love surfacing in our relationships with others, then we have evidence of God's abiding in us. This is especially true in situations where, if we were acting in the flesh, we would be indifferent at best or antagonistic or hateful at worst. When our knee-jerk reaction is to lash out at someone who has wronged us, but instead we feel an inner check and we speak in kindness, it is evidence that God is abiding in us. Although we cannot see God, who is spirit, we can see the evidence of His abiding in us when we love one another. ([1 John 4:12-16 Assurance of Abiding](#))

Hobbs summarizes 1Jn 4:12 -This teaches that love fulfils two functions in our lives. First, it is the visible evidence that God dwells in us. The thought is that Christians, by the practice of loving deeds, become the means by which the invisible God is seen. Second, when we practice love, God's love "is perfected in us" (1Jn 4:12b). This means that our love is the ripened fruit of His love.

Wuest - The word "**God**" is in the emphatic position, coming first in the Greek sentence, namely, "God no one ever yet has seen." The word "God" is without the article, indicating that character, essence, or nature is stressed. "Deity in its essence" no one has ever yet seen.

No one - The pronoun **oudeis** signifies absolute negation. Absolutely no one! Absolutely **no one** has "gazed" at God. And as discussed below the verb (theaomai) means more than simply to see but to gaze until one grasps the significance of what they are beholding.

John's somewhat abrupt and surprising statement seems to fly in the face of Moses' statement "So Jacob named the place Peniel, for [he said,] "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." (Ge 32:30) But on the other hand Moses records "But He (God) said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" (Ex 33:20)

James Montgomery Boice explains that "The Old Testament Theophanies (See [Theophany](#)) ; [Theophany-2](#)), including the apparently contradictory statement in Exodus 24:10 ("they saw the God of Israel"), did not involve the full revelation of God as He is in Himself but only a suggestion of what He is in form that a human being could understand."

As an aside, since God presented Himself in a Theophany numerous times in the OT, this passage strongly supports that it is Jesus Who was manifested (See related discussion of the **Angel of the LORD**)

In the opening line of this epistle, John wrote "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what **we have seen** with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life (Jesus the Messiah)." (1John 1:1-**note**) So while it is true that "**no one has seen God**" the Father, it is not true that no one has seen God at all, because to behold Jesus was to behold the Father (Jn 14:9).

In John's Gospel we see essentially the same words '**No man has seen God at any time**; the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.'" (John 1:18-**note**)

William Barclay - It is by love that God is known (1John 4:12). We cannot see God, because He is spirit; what we can see is his effect. We cannot see the wind, but we can see what it can do. We cannot see electricity, but we can see the effect it produces. The effect of God is love. It is when God comes into a man that he is clothed with the love of God and the love of men. God is known by his effect on that man. It has been said, "A saint is a man in whom Christ lives again" and the best demonstration of God comes not from argument but from a life of love. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

Hiebert explains the surprising statement that **no one has seen God** - The assumed logic is that since it is easier for us to love someone whom we can see and know directly than one whom we have never seen personally, how can they profess to know and love God whom they have never seen and yet hate the brother who is visibly present with them? For those who disparage the obligation to love the brethren, no vaunted mystical visions of God will ever enable them to attain to a vital relationship with God. John has already informed his readers that a direct vision of God awaits the time of the Parousia (1Jn 3:2-**note**). ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#)) (See also related journal article - [1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent](#))

Spurgeon - "God dwelleth in us" though we do not see him. The nearest approach we can have to God is by this golden way of love.

Guzik on **no one has seen God** - In speaking of God the Father, Paul wrote in 1Timothy 1:17: Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible. Jesus declared of God the Father, God is Spirit, (John 4:24) meaning that God the Father has no tangible body which may be seen. Knowing God the Father is invisible should make us more humble in our relationship with Him. God the Father is not completely knowable by us; we can't completely figure out God, or know all His secrets. He is beyond us. Of course, no one has seen God the Holy Spirit at any time either, though He has represented Himself in various ways. And just as certainly, God the Son, Jesus Christ, has been seen - John himself testified to this in 1John 1:1-3-**note**. But of God the Father, it can truly be said, no one has seen God at any time.

AM I REFLECTING THE FATHER'S LOVE?

John Stott explains why John brings up the point that **no one has seen God** writing that "the unseen God, Who was once revealed in His Son, is now revealed in His people if and when they love one another. God's love is seen in their love because their love is His love imparted to them by His Spirit. . . . The words do not mean that when we begin to love, God comes to dwell in us, but the reverse. Our love for one another is evidence of God's indwelling presence." ([The Letters of John - Tyndale New Testament Commentary](#))

This begs the question dear child of God - Can others "see" the unseen God Who abides in you by the way you love? This is a very convicting question.

Has seen ([2300](#))(**theaomai** from **tháomai** = to wonder, from **thaúma** = wonder, admiration <> English = theatrical spectacular performance) means to have an attentive look, to have regard for something, to contemplate, to take in with one's eyes (implying that one is impressed by what he sees - see use in Mt 22:11). **Theaomai** implies an intent contemplative gaze. The point is that it is not a mere glance or quick look, but a long, searching gaze (e.g., Lk 23:55). **Theaomai** describes intelligent beholding, a "careful and deliberate vision which interprets its object" (G. Abbott-Smith). It means to gaze at a show or demonstration or to watch as in a theater. (thus giving us the origin of our English word "*theater*"). (2) **Theaomai** can mean to see for the purpose of visiting as in Ro 15:24. (3) Finally some lexicon's (BDAG) state **theaomai** can mean to perceive something above and beyond what is merely seen with the eye (this nuance clearly overlaps with definition #1 above).

The apostle John uses **theaomai** in his Gospel to describe the wonder of beholding "the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn 1:14). He uses **theaomai** to describe the "Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven" and remaining on Jesus (Jn 1:32). Jesus uses when he calls on his disciples to "lift up your eyes and look on the fields that...are white for harvest." (Jn 4:35) Jesus used **theaomai** rather than a verb meaning simple sight, because He wanted His disciples not only to see the people

streaming out of the city, but to contemplate the meaning and significance of this event. In Jn 11:45 "many of the Jews who came to Mary, and **saw (theaomai)** what He had done (raising Lazarus from the dead), believed in Him." These Jews were eyewitnesses to the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection from the dead. Their "seeing" including their contemplating what they saw and the result was that they believed in Jesus.

Wuest notes that "The verb is in the perfect tense. The expanded translation reads, "Deity in its essence no one has ever yet beheld, with the present result that no one has the capacity of beholding Him."

Westcott comments that "Here the thought is of the continuous beholding that answers to abiding fellowship."

Morris on **no one has seen God** - But "the only begotten Son...hath declared Him" (John 1:18). "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," Jesus said (Jn 14:9). Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). In a lesser way, though quite real, just as we see God in Christ, so men can see God's attribute of love in us if we have allowed the Holy Spirit to bring His fruit (Gal 5:22) to perfection in our lives.

Wiersbe asks **no one has seen God** - How, then, does God reveal Himself to the world? He reveals Himself through the lives of His children. Men cannot see God, but they can see us. If we abide in Christ, we will love one another, and our love for one another will reveal God's love to a needy world. God's love will be experienced in us and then will be expressed through us. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

If we love one another - What John is showing now is that there is a direct relationship between our practice of love and our experience of God.

As **Hiebert** explains "The practice of mutual Christian love confirms that "God dwells in us". John asserts that whenever believers practice mutual love, God's love becomes visible in the lives of those in whom He abides. The love which He has implanted in the heart of the believer through the Holy Spirit (1Jn 4:13; Ro 5:5-**note**) is thus visibly expressed and confirms the reality of God's indwelling presence. The practice of mutual love further signifies that "His love is perfected in us"" ([The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary](#)) (See also related journal article - [1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent](#))

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**.

If we love one another the unseen God is in a sense seen by the Spirit enabled supernatural love we show to others.

God abides in us - To Whom might "**God**" refer? While the Trinity indwells believers (even the Father - "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him." Jn 14:23), this is probably best interpreted as a reference to the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Helper Jesus would ask the Father to send (Jn 14:16), Whom the Father promised (Lk 24:49, Acts 1:4, Acts 2:33) and would Himself would send (Jn 14:26), and also Whom Jesus would send (Jn 15:26, Jn 16:7). Paul says we were "sealed (**sphragizo**) in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is given as a pledge (**arrabon** = deposit, down payment) of our inheritance." (Eph 1:13-14-**note**) In 1Jn 4:13 John says God "has given us of His Spirit." In short, the fact that **God abides in us** (continually - **present tense**) is a clear reference to the permanent relationship which God has with each believer. You cannot lose your salvation (but of course you must be genuine saved and that is part of John's purpose of this epistle - 1Jn 5:11-13) Note that our loving one another does not make or cause God to abide in us, but shows that He abides in us for we could only love one another as His Spirit abiding in us enables us.

In 1Jn 3:17-**note** he alludes to the "love of God" abiding in those who take care of the needs of their brethren.

Spurgeon adds "He is not far to seek. If you love one another, God is in you; he dwells in you, he is your nearest and dearest Friend, the Author of all other love. The grace of love comes from the God of love."

Guzik - Some people think the greatest evidence of God's presence or work is power. Some people think the greatest evidence of God's presence or work is popularity. Some people think the greatest evidence of God's presence or work is passionate feelings. But the greatest evidence of God's presence and work is love. Where God is present and working, there will be love. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

Abides (resides, dwells) ([3306](#))(**meno**) in simple terms means to remain in the same place or position over a period of time. It means to reside, stay, live, lodge, tarry or dwell. Meno describes something that remains where it is, continues in a fixed state, and so endures. In the present context John speaks of the intimate oneness that believers (continually - **present tense**) have with God.

Meno is used 24 times in First John - 1 John 2:6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 24, 27-28; 3:6, 9, 14-15, 17, 24; 4:12-13, 15-16. (Note: four verses have more than one use)

Steven Cole comments on how this verb can be misinterpreted - Clearly, John wants us to know some things with assurance. He

wants us to be solid and secure in our relationship with God. In our text, he wants us (1Jn 4:13-note) to “know that we abide in Him and He in us...” In 1Jn 4:12-note, John mentions God’s **abiding** in us. Then in 1Jn 4:13, 15, & 1Jn 4:16, he repeats the same truth in terms of **mutual abiding, God in us and we in God. John wants to give us assurance of this mutual abiding relationship**. While “**abide**” is John’s word for fellowship with God, it would be a mistake to think that only some believers enter into this abiding relationship, while other believers do not abide. To be sure, the abiding relationship grows and deepens over a lifetime. Those who have walked with Christ for decades enjoy closer fellowship with Him than those who are newer in their faith. But in John’s mind, every Christian abides in Christ and Christ in him. If you are not abiding in Him and He in you, then you are not saved. So when we talk about assurance of abiding, we are talking about assurance of salvation. John’s message here is...We can be assured that God abides in us and we in Him if we see His Spirit producing in us love for one another and confession of the truth about Jesus Christ. ([1 John 4:12-16 Assurance of Abiding](#)) (Bolding added)

Wiersbe writes that **abide** “is used six times in 1John 4:12–16. It refers to our personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. To abide in Christ means to remain in spiritual oneness with Him, so that no sin comes between us. Because we are “born of God,” we have *union* with Christ; but it is only as we trust Him and obey His commandments that we have *communion* with Him. Much as a faithful husband and wife “abide in love” though they may be separated by miles, so a believer abides in God’s love. This abiding is made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1John 4:13-note).” ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Earlier John wrote “whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.” (1Jn 2:5-note).

His love is perfected in us - This refers not to our love for God but His love for us (but see note by Vincent below). John is describing what happens to when believers love one another. As they do they grow toward the goal of godliness and Christ-likeness and His love for mankind. As the **NET Note** says “The love that comes from God, the love that He has for us, reaches perfection in our love for others, which is what God wants and what believers are commanded to do (see 1Jn 3:23b-note).

Vincent feels that “**His love**” is “not our love to Him, nor His love to us, but the love which is peculiarly His; which answers to His nature.”

Piper on His love - The love that you have as a born again person is no mere imitation of the divine love. It is an experience of the divine love and an extension of that love to others.

Wuest on is perfected (Is brought to completion, is accomplished) - If saints have this **agape** love habitually for one another, that shows that this love which God is in His nature, **has accomplished its purpose in their lives**. It has made us loving and self-sacrificial in our characters. This love has been brought to its human fulness in the lives of the saints. The verb “is perfected” is perfect in tense, speaking of a past completed act having present results. ([Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#)) (Bolding added)

John Stott - John goes further still. Reciprocal Christian love means not only that God lives in us but also that his love is made complete in us. It would be hard to exaggerate the greatness of this conception. It is so daring that many commentators have been reluctant to accept it and have suggested that the genitive in his love is not subjective (‘God’s love’) but objective (‘our love for God’; cf. 1Jn 2:5-note) or definitive (‘Godlike love’). But the whole paragraph is concerned with God’s love and we must not stagger at the majesty of this conclusion. God’s love, which originates in himself (1Jn 4:7–8-note) and was manifested in his Son (1Jn 4:9–10-note), is made complete in his people (1Jn 4:12). It is ‘brought to perfection within us’ (NEB). God’s love for us is perfected only when it is reproduced in us or (as it may mean) ‘among us’ in the Christian fellowship. It is these three truths about the love of God which John uses as inducements to brotherly love. We are to love each other, first because God is love (1Jn 4:8–9), secondly because God loved us (1Jn 4:10–11-note), and thirdly because, if we do love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us (1Jn 4:12). ([The Letters of John - Tyndale New Testament Commentary](#))

Is perfected ([5048](#))(**teleioo** related to **teleios** from **telos** = an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal, consummate soundness, idea of being whole) means to accomplish or bring to an end or to the intended goal (telos). It means to be complete, mature, fully developed, full grown, wanting nothing necessary to completeness. **Teleioo** does not mean simply to terminate something but to carry it out to the full finish which is picked up in the translation “**perfected**”. **Teleioo** signifies the attainment of consummate soundness and includes the idea of being made whole. Interestingly the Gnostics used **teleios** of one fully initiated into their mysteries and that may have been why Paul used **teleios** in this epistle.

Teleioo is in the **perfect tense** signifying the continuing effect of this perfection. **Wuest** adds that **perfected** in the perfect tense means “has been made perfect or complete, and exists in its finished results.” This represents a past fact in the saint’s life and a present reality.”

Hiebert explains that “the **perfect** passive verb “is perfected” (teteleiōmenē...estin) does not imply any previous imperfection in

God's love but rather presents God's love as having been brought to its goal objectively in that life. (Cf. the same verb in 1Jn 2:5-**note**.) Morgan suggests the following in illustration: "There is all the difference between its existence in the heart, and its expansion in the life, that may be observed between the root of the plant deposited in the soil and its rich and widespread foliage, and its clusters of flowers or fruits." ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#)) (See also related journal article - [1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent](#))

Wiersbe - God's love is **proclaimed** in the Word ("God is love") and **proved** at the cross. But here we have something deeper: God's love is **perfected** in the believer. Fantastic as it may seem, God's love is not made perfect in angels, but in sinners saved by His grace. We Christians are now the tabernacles and temples in which God dwells. He reveals His love through us. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, famous British preacher, had five sons, all of whom became ministers of the Gospel. One day a visitor in their home dared to ask a personal question: "Which of you six is the best preacher?" Their united answer was, "Mother!" Of course, Mrs. Campbell Morgan had never preached a formal sermon in a church; but her life was a constant sermon on the love of God. The life of a Christian who abides in God's love is a potent witness for God in the world. Men cannot see God, but they can see His love moving us to deeds of helpfulness and kindness. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

[Let Others See Jesus in You](#)

While passing thro' this world of sin
And others your life shall view
Be clean and pure without and within
Let others see Jesus in you.

Your life's a book before their eyes,
They're reading it thro' and thro'
Say does it point them to they skies
Do others see Jesus in you?

Then live for Christ both day and night,

Be faithful, be brave and true
And lead the lost to life and Christ,

Let others see Jesus in you.

Let others see Jesus in you.

Let others see Jesus in you.

Keep telling the story, be faithful and true.

Let others see Jesus in you.

**"By this all men will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another."**

John 13:35

Harry Ironside has an interesting comment on **no man has seen God** - This is not the first time this expression is found in the Scriptures. In John 1:18 you will find the exact same words, "No man hath seen God at any time." Let's examine these controversial words, for Scripture seems to indicate that there were many instances where men saw God. Didn't God speak with Moses face to face, and didn't He put him in a cleft of the rock while He passed by? Didn't Adam speak with God in the garden? And doesn't Isaiah say that "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1)? Didn't Ezekiel have visions of God, and didn't the glory of the Lord appear to Daniel and many others? Yes, and yet it remains true that, "No man hath seen God at any time." God is a Spirit, infinite and eternal, and is Himself invisible. Christ, however, has revealed God to men. But before Jesus became incarnate, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit were all invisible. The Old Testament characters of whom it is written that they saw God, saw a form that God took-a Theophany-by which He revealed Himself to them. They saw His glory and splendor, but they could not see His deity. **No one, in a sense, has ever seen you.** People have seen your body, your face, and your eyes, but they have never seen the **real you**-the spirit that looks out through your eyes. We cannot see the real man, for under present conditions the spirit of man is invisible. We shall never really see one another as long as we are in the flesh, but in eternity we shall see and know one another in spirit. No one has ever seen the sun. Someone might object to that and say, "How can you tell me that I have never seen the sun! Of course I have seen it. I have seen it rise, I have seen it moving through the heavens, I have seen it set as it dips into the west." But you are mistaken. You have never seen the sun! You have seen the robe of glory that envelopes it, but you cannot pierce that glory and see behind the flame that enfolds that great globe. That would be impossible. It is the sun that gives out that glory and you cannot even gaze on that in its full strength at noonday for one minute, because of its blinding glare. A great astronomer was so delighted when one of the finest telescopes was

first invented that, in his haste to look at the sun through it, he forgot to put the dark glass over the lens. Swinging that great instrument into place, he leaned down and with the naked eye looked through the lens at the sun. The next moment he uttered a cry of pain as the blinding light burned his eye, destroying its sight completely! Plato said, "The radiant light is the shadow of God." David declared of God, Thou "coverest thyself with light as with a garment" (Ps 104:2). The light, the glory, the radiance is just the garment, and God is behind it all, invisible. We read in John 1:18 that "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Jesus Christ came into the world as God revealed in the flesh and made God known to man. We understand God as we could not have done otherwise. Jesus said, "**He that hath seen me hath seen the Father**" (John 14:9). In Hebrews 1:3 we read that Christ is "the express image" of the Father. In other words, Jesus is the exact expression of God's character. All that God is is seen in Jesus. Jesus walked this world for a brief period of thirty-three and one-half years, and during that time God was manifest, God was seen on the earth, in the person of His Son. When Jesus went back to Heaven was God left without any manifestation on earth? We read, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God [abideth] in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). God dwells in all believers, but the Greek word for dwelleth is different from that for abideth. If we love one another, we exhibit the new and divine nature. If we walk in love, then men can see God in us, for God abideth in us. If we are living in fellowship with God, we are manifesting and making Him known.

We have read the account of the professed conversion of the President of China (Chiang Kai-shek). We hope there has been a real work in his soul, but only eternity will tell. I was reading how he came to his Christian wife who was saved long before he made a profession, and said, "I can't understand these Christians. They have been treated most abominably here. They have been robbed, beaten, and many of them killed. They have been persecuted fearfully, and yet I never find one of them retaliating. Anytime they can do anything for China and for our people, they are ready to do it. I do not understand them." "Well," said his wife, "that is the very essence of Christianity. They do that because they are Christians." That is how God is manifest in China, and how you and I are called on to manifest Him wherever we may be. There are many who will never read the Bible, but they are reading us. They are looking at our lives. How much of God is really seen in us?

You are writing a gospel, a chapter a day,
By deeds that you do, by words that you say.
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true;
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

People may never read the Gospel of Matthew, never look at the Gospel of Luke, never heed the Gospel of Mark, and never consider the Gospel of John, but they are reading the gospel of you—they are watching you, listening to you, and observing you. They are getting their ideas of Christ and of God from what they hear and see in you.

A number of years ago I was down in Ganado, Arizona, visiting a Presbyterian mission. In the hospital there was a poor Navajo woman who had been desperately ill but had been nursed back to life and health through the Christian missionary doctor and nurses. She was a poor Indian woman who had been cast out by her own people when they thought she was going to die. She had been thrown behind a clump of brush and left there for three or four days. It was the middle of August when the heat is terrific during the daytime and the nights become bitterly cold. There she lay without food or drink, suffering terribly. This missionary doctor found her, brought her to the hospital, and did everything that Christian love and surgical skill could suggest. At last he brought her back to health. After nine weeks in the hospital, she began to wonder about the love shown to her and said to the nurse, "I can't understand it. Why did he do all that for me? He is a white man and I am an Indian. My own people threw me out. I can't understand it. I've never heard of anything like this before." The Navajo nurse, a sweet Christian girl, said to her, "You know, it is the love of Christ that made him do that." "What do you mean by the love of Christ? Who is this Christ? Tell me more about Him." The nurse was afraid she would not tell it in the right way and so called the missionary doctor. He sat down and talked to her, and day by day unfolded the wonderful story. After a few weeks (for she could take in only a little at a time) the hospital staff thought she understood enough to make her decision. They had a special prayer meeting for her then gathered around her bed and prayed that God by His Spirit would open her blind eyes. Again they told her the story of God's love, and asked, "Can't you trust this Savior? Turn from the idols you have worshiped, and trust Him as the Son of the living God!" She looked at them with her big dark Indian eyes and was silent a long time. Then the door to her room opened and the doctor stepped in. Her face lit up and she said, "If Jesus is anything like the doctor, I can trust Him forever," and she came to Christ. Do you see what had reached her? She had seen divine love manifested in a man. That is what you and I are called to exhibit to the world.

"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth [abideth] in us, and his love is perfected in us." The love that was revealed so fully in Jesus is now being revealed in those who have trusted in the risen Christ. They are called to make known to a lost world the same wondrous love that led Him to go to the cross. ([1 John 4 Commentary - Ironside's Notes on Selected Books](#))

Family Trademarks - The Aran Islands, off the west coast of Ireland, are known for their beautiful sweaters. Patterns are woven into

the fabric using sheep's wool to craft the garments. Many of them relate to the culture and folklore of these small islands, but some are more personal. Each family on the islands has its own trademark pattern, which is so distinctive that if a fisherman were to drown it is said that he could be identified simply by examining his sweater for the family trademark.

In John's first letter, the apostle describes things that are to be trademarks of those who are members of God's family. In 1 John 3:1, John affirms that we are indeed part of God's family by saying, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" He then describes the trademarks of those who are the children of God, including, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (4:7).

Because "love is of God," the chief way to reflect the heart of the Father is by displaying the love that characterizes Him. May we allow His love to reach out to others through us—for love is one of our family trademarks.

Father, teach me to love with the love of Christ that others might see Your love reflected in my care and concern for them. May Your love drive and dominate my responses to life and to others. By Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Love is the family resemblance the world should see in followers of Christ.