

1 John 4:21 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			

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 4

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+

"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading. (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

"Asking questions is the key to understanding."

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...

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1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV 1 John 4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

BGT 1 John 4:21 κα τα την τ ν ντολ ν χομεν π α το , να γαπ ν τ ν θε ν γαπ κα τ ν δελφ ν α το .

NET 1 John 4:21 And the commandment we have from him is this: that the one who loves God should love his fellow Christian too.

CSB 1 John 4:21 And we have this command from Him: The one who loves God must also love his brother.

ESV 1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

NIV 1 John 4:21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

NLT 1 John 4:21 And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.

NRS 1 John 4:21 The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

NJB 1 John 4:21 Indeed this is the commandment we have received from him, that whoever loves God, must also love his brother.

NAB 1 John 4:21 This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

YLT 1 John 4:21 and this is the command we have from Him, that he who is loving God, may also love his brother.

MIT 1 John 4:21 This is the command we have from him: One who loves God must also love his brother.

GWN 1 John 4:21 Christ has given us this commandment: The person who loves God must also love other believers.

BBE 1 John 4:21 And this is the word which we have from him, that he who has love for God is to have the same love for his brother.

RSV 1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

NKJ 1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

ASV 1 John 4:21 And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

Amplified - And this command (charge, order, injunction) we have from Him: that he who loves God shall love his brother believer] also.

Wuest - And this commandment we have from Him; the one who is constantly loving God, should constantly be loving also his brother. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

- 1Jn 4:11 3:11,14,18,23 Lev 19:18 Mt 22:37-39 Mk 12:29-33 Lu 10:37 John 13:34-35 Jn 15:12 Ro 12:9,10, 13:9,10 Ga 5:6,14 1Th 4:9 1Pe 3:8 4:8

Related Passages:

1Jn 4:7-8+ Beloved, let us **love** one another, for love is from God; and everyone who **loves** is born of God and knows God. 8The one who does not **love** does not know God, for God is love.

1Jn 4:10-12+ 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 beheld God at any time; if we **love** one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

1Jn 4:19-21+ We **love**, because He first **loved** us. 20 If someone says, "I **love** God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not **love** his brother whom he has seen, cannot **love** God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who **loves** God should **love** his brother also.

John 13:34-35+ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as (HERE IS THE "QUALIFIER" - JESUS CALLS FOR LOVE LIKE HE LOVED!) I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 15:12+ "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

Mark 12:30-31+ 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.' 31 "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Galatians 5:14+ For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

COMMANDMENT TO LOVE REITERATED

And this commandment ([entole](#)) **we** (apostles and all believers) **have from Him, that** ([hina](#)) **the one who loves** ([agapao](#) - present tense) **God should love** ([agapao](#) - present tense) **his brother** (adelphos) **also** - The **commandment** ([entole](#)) is from Jesus (Jn 13:34-35+, Jn 15:12+). The conjunction **that** ([hina](#)) may introduce the intent or purpose of the **commandment**. (but see [Harris](#)) The principle is straightforward. Love of God is validated by love of our **brethren** and this love is not a nice suggestion but a serious **commandment**. And remember that God's **commandment** always comes "prepackaged" so to speak with His enablement. He never asks us to do anything that He does not empower us to do. He is commanding supernatural [agape](#) love which is only possible by reliance on the Holy Spirit Who He has given each believer.

[W Hall Harris](#) interprets the [hina](#) clause differently than in the previous comment - The [hina](#)-clause in 1 John 4:21 could be giving the purpose or the result of the commandment mentioned in the first half of the verse, but if it does, the author nowhere specifies what the commandment consists of. It makes better sense to understand this [hina](#)-clause as epexegetical (explanatory) to the pronoun ταύτην (tautēn, "this") at the beginning of 4:21554 and thus explaining what the commandment consists of: "that the one who loves God should love his fellow Christian too."

The fact that God commands us to love shows that it is not always effortless or easy.

Steven Cole - John... knows that it is easy to make up excuses for our lack of love: "I've tried, but this person is impossible to love." "If you knew how difficult this person is, you'd understand why I don't love him." So he shows, Love that gives us confidence in the day of judgment is God's commandment, not just a nice suggestion (1Jn 4:21). The Bible calls them the two great commandments (Mt. 22:36-40+), not "the two great suggestions, if you'd maybe like to give it a try." John reminds us that the commandment comes directly from God (see also, 1Jn 3:23+). This means that we are not free to shrug it off if we claim to be Christians. The fact that love can be commanded shows that it is not primarily a feeling, but rather an action: a caring, self-sacrificing commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved. By God's grace and in dependence on the Holy Spirit, you can and must practice such love, even toward those who are difficult to love. The fact that God commands us to love shows that it is not always effortless or easy. If love just gushed out of us like a mountain spring, then John wouldn't have labored the point as much as he does. Some of you have experienced deep wounds from those who profess to be Christians. I'm not saying that loving them will be easy, but I am saying that it is not optional. God gave us this commandment, and He didn't attach a list of exceptions for difficult cases. ([1 John 4:17-21 Facing the Judgment with Confidence](#))

Loving one's brother is not just a spiritual requirement; it also is a command.

-- Danny Akin

Henry Alford - And besides this argument from common sense (1Jn 4:20), there is another most powerful one, which the Apostle here adds (**this commandment**)... where have we this commandment? In the great summary of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, ... and thy neighbor as thyself," so often cited by our Lord; see Mt. 22:37-39+).

John Stott - The folly of the liar's position (in 1Jn 4:20+) is seen not only in its inherent inconsistency, but in the fact that love for God and love for our brother form one single command (cf. 1Jn 3:23+). Jesus himself taught this. It was he who united Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18, and then declared that all the Law and the Prophets hung upon them (Matt. 22:37-40+). We may not separate what Jesus has joined. Besides, if we love God we shall keep his commands (1Jn 2:5+; 1Jn 5:3+), and his command is to love our neighbour as ourselves. (Borrow [The Letters of John](#))

C H Spurgeon - This is that "new commandment" which our Lord gave to His apostles, and through them to His whole church. "That ye love one another as I have loved you." John was, in a special sense, "that disciple whom Jesus loved." It was meet, therefore, that he should be the apostle to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring "this commandment" to the remembrance of any who had forgotten it. "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." God help us so to do, of His great grace! (Exposition on 1 John 4)

Marvin Vincent sees **his brother** as referring to Christ's brethren and quotes Augustine "To the persecutor Saul, Christ said, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? I have ascended into heaven, yet still I lie upon earth. Here I sit at the right hand of the Father; there I still hunger, thirst, and am a stranger.'"

Danny Akin points out that "Love God and love one's brother is really 2 parts of one command. One looks toward heaven and the other looks toward earth." In his commentary Akin goes on to elaborate...

"And we have this command from Him" refers again to the words of Jesus concerning the greatest command, found in Matthew 22:37-39 and Mark 12:30-31. What Jesus gave us was a command. It was not a suggestion or recommendation. It was not just a good idea we might consider. If we truly love God, then we must truly love our brother as well. The Godward and human-directed aspects of love cannot be divided. They

cannot be separated. They really are the bookends of all the commands. They are the “heads and tails” of the same coin of love. Our ability to actually love God is wedded to the reality of our love for fellow human beings. And such a love is not sporadic or periodic. It is not occasional. It is continual. It reflects and demonstrates for all to see the love of God for sinners that was put on public display on a bloody Roman cross when “the Father ... sent His Son as the world’s Savior” (1 John 4:14). As D. Edmond Hiebert has wisely observed, “Since God’s love is no longer visible in the presence of the incarnate Christ here on earth, God is manifesting His love as it is now displayed in His people” (“An Exposition of 1 John 4:7–21,” 83). [Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John - Page 117](#)

Brian Bell - So the end of this matter is this: loving God and loving others is a package deal. You can’t have one w/o the other. There is a natural, logical kind of loving that loves lovely things and lovely people. That’s logical. But there is another kind of loving that doesn’t look for value in what it loves, but that **CREATES** value in what it loves. Like a small child’s rag doll. When a little girl, has a little rag doll, it is often an inseparable companion. She has other toys that are intrinsically far more valuable, but none that she loves like she loves the rag doll. Soon the rag doll becomes more and more rag and less and less doll. It also became more and more dirty. If you tried to clean the rag doll, it became more ragged still. And if you didn’t try to clean the rag doll, it became dirtier still. The sensible thing to do is to trash the rag doll. But that was unthinkable for anyone who loved the little child. If you loved the little girl, you love the rag doll - it is part of the package. We’re under a new law—the law of LOVE. (Ed: But we have a NEW power enabling us to keep this law, out of love, not legalism -- the indwelling Spirit. Let Him love through you!) ([Sermon Notes on 1 John 4:7-21](#))

*Loved with everlasting love, Led by grace that love to know;
Gracious Spirit from above, Thou hast taught me it is so!
O, this full and perfect peace! O, this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease, I am His, and He is mine.*

ILLUSTRATION - Steven Cole concludes with a short story - An 11 year-old girl and her 8 year-old brother fought over the slightest thing. So their father was surprised when the girl made an artistic card for her brother’s birthday. Inside she wrote, “Happy birthday to my nine-year-old brother. I am so glad to have a brother to love. So God gave me you. P.S. Don’t read this out loud or I will twist your head off.” (Reader’s Digest [Jan., 1999], p. 78.) Well, she’s got a ways to go, but at least she’s working at loving her brother! I encourage you to work at it with those you live with and with those in this church. Remember, the payoff for obedience to this command is that you will have confidence before God in the day of judgment. Our primary source of confidence is that we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood as the propitiation for our sins. It is only His blood, not our works, that atones for sins. But, how do we know that our faith in Christ is genuine, since it is easy to be deceived? One evidence of genuine faith is when we see God’s love flowing through us to others, especially to others that we would not naturally love. The more you see God’s love surfacing in your life, the more you will “have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (1Jn 2:28+). ([1 John 4:17-21 Facing the Judgment with Confidence](#))

*We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
And we pray that our unity will one day be restored*

*And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yeah they’ll know we are Christians by our love*

*We will work with each other, we will work side by side
We will work with each other, we will work side by side
And we’ll guard each man’s dignity and save each man’s pride*

*And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yeah, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.*

*We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand
And together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land*

*And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
They will know we are Christians by our love*
([Play this great old song as you praise Him](#))

Commandment (instruction, order, requirement)(1785) **entole** from **en** = in, upon + **téllō** = accomplish, charge, command) - **Entole** refers to some type of demand or requirement. A general injunction, charge, precept of moral and religious nature. Commandments are those given by our Lord either personally while on earth or through His apostles in the New Testament Books. Of the 67 uses, all but three (Lk 15:29; Col 4:10; Titus 1:14) refer specifically to divine commandments. Keeping God's commandments is the way we show that we love Him (we can say it, but our actions need to authenticate our words. (Jn 14:15, 21, 1Jn 2:3).

Commandment (Webster) - a law, edict, or statute; authoritative directive; a mandate; an order or injunction given by authority; charge; precept.

ENTOLE USES BY JOHN - Jn. 10:18; Jn. 11:57; Jn. 12:49; Jn. 12:50; Jn. 13:34; Jn. 14:15; Jn. 14:21; Jn. 15:10; Jn. 15:12; 1 Jn. 2:3; 1 Jn. 2:4; 1 Jn. 2:7; 1 Jn. 2:8; 1 Jn. 3:22; 1 Jn. 3:23; 1 Jn. 3:24; 1 Jn. 4:21; 1 Jn. 5:2; 1 Jn. 5:3; 2 Jn. 1:4; 2 Jn. 1:5; 2 Jn. 1:6; Rev. 12:17; Rev. 14:12

Love (25)(agapao) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men (John 3:16), the way He loves the Son (John 3:35, 15:9, 17:23, 24). Note that **agapao** is a verb and by its verbal nature calls for action. This quality of love is not an emotion but is an action initiated by a volitional choice."expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship." (John Macarthur)

Vine writes that "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9, 10. But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, Ro 5:8. It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself." ([Collected Writings](#))

Wuest says agape "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." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

*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 as John writes we are commanded to do so.*

AGAPAO USES BY JOHN - Jn. 3:16; Jn. 3:19; Jn. 3:35; Jn. 8:42; Jn. 10:17; Jn. 11:5; Jn. 12:43; Jn. 13:1; Jn. 13:23; Jn. 13:34; Jn. 14:15; Jn. 14:21; Jn. 14:23; Jn. 14:24; Jn. 14:28; Jn. 14:31; Jn. 15:9; Jn. 15:12; Jn. 15:17; Jn. 17:23; Jn. 17:24; Jn. 17:26; Jn. 19:26; Jn. 21:7; Jn. 21:15; Jn. 21:16; Jn. 21:20; 1 Jn. 2:10; 1 Jn. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:10; 1 Jn. 3:11; 1 Jn. 3:14; 1 Jn. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:23; 1 Jn. 4:7; 1 Jn. 4:8; 1 Jn. 4:10; 1 Jn. 4:11; 1 Jn. 4:12; 1 Jn. 4:19; 1 Jn. 4:20; 1 Jn. 4:21; 1 Jn. 5:1; 1 Jn. 5:2; 2 Jn. 1:1; 2 Jn. 1:5; 3 Jn. 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:5; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 12:11; Rev. 20:9

A Multiplied Love

When a woman in Karen's church was diagnosed with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease), things looked bad. This cruel disease affects nerves and muscles, eventually leading to paralysis. The family's insurance wouldn't cover home care, and the stricken woman's husband couldn't bear the thought of putting her in a nursing home.

As a nurse, Karen had the expertise to help and began going to the woman's home to care for her. But she soon realized she couldn't take care of her own family while meeting the needs of her friend, so she started teaching others in the church to help. As the disease ran its course over the next seven years, Karen trained thirty-one additional volunteers who surrounded that family with love, prayer, and practical assistance.

Ask God to show you how He wants you to use your gifts for His kingdom.

"Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister," said John the disciple (1 John 4:21). Karen gives us a shining example of that kind of love. She had the skills, compassion, and vision to rally a church family around a hurting friend. Her love for one person in need became a multiplied love lived out by many.

How might God use your talents and abilities to serve others in need? Ask God to show you how He wants you to use your gifts for His kingdom.

To learn more, read [God Is Love at discoveryseries.org/q0612](http://discoveryseries.org/q0612).

Love your neighbor as yourself. —Jesus

INSIGHT: In the gospel of John, Jesus told His disciples that love would be the identifying mark of His followers: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (13:35). He also told them: “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (15:10). The connection between these two verses is as simple as it is wonderful: Loving Jesus means keeping His commands, and His command is to love. In fact, John says we cannot do one if we do not do the other. They cannot be separated—we cannot love God in one way and fellow believers in another way. Rather, “Whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:20).

By Tim Gustafson (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Charles Stanley - A LOYAL FRIEND

He who loves God must love his brother also. 1 JOHN 4:21

The way you feel toward another person is not an automatic consequence of what that person did—it is a matter of what you have allowed yourself to feel...

The truth is we all are different human beings with differing perspectives, ideals, and ideas about our world, but those differences should not cause brokenness among us. We should be able to live in peace with each other. One valuable trait that will enable people of differing values to have satisfactory friendships with each other is if they have loyalty toward each other. Loyalty allows us to disagree on certain things and yet be committed to our friendship and a long-term association.

The Proof of Love 1 John 4:7–21

Think about this for a moment: How do you know God loves you? As you give this question some thought, here is a short story that will add some color to your imagination.

Many years ago a man found himself hiking in a mountain wilderness. Far from civilization, he was lost and he knew it. What began as a miscalculation back at the home base station had grown into a dangerous adventure. As he hiked back in a direction that looked correct, he noticed over his shoulder smoke billowing from the forest. “Wildfire!” The hiker quickened his pace as he began to worry about the oncoming fire.

What would he do? He was lost and the fire would eventually consume him. After an hour had gone by, he came to the edge of a great divide. Below him was a deep ravine. On the other side was safety. But getting across was impossible. As he walked further down the edge of the ravine, he noticed that a great tree had fallen and bridged the two sides. This was his way to escape certain death: to walk across the tree and reach the other side.

In the same sense, we were saved from destruction by God’s love for us. Now, we see others lost and the eternal fires of hell coming ever closer to consume them. God had mercy on you as He placed a great tree—the cross of Christ—over the great divide between man’s sin and God’s holiness. In love, we, too, must show others the way to be saved. Each one must be led to the cross.

Loving others proves that you have accepted God’s love—the provision of His Son who died for your sins. And there is no greater way to show your love for others than to show them the way of escape—the way of the cross.

Focusing on People LOVE 1 John 4:7–21

Jesus Christ did not come into the world to save an institution—He came to save people. Walter B. Knight stresses this point with this thought-provoking story.

A budding high-school orator delivered Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Calmly he began, “Fourscore and seven years ago.” He glowed with fervency when he came to the climactic words “... that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth!” The audience applauded ... An old man hobbled slowly through the crowd and said to the young orator, “You did a grand job, son! You will be interested to know that I was present at Gettysburg when Lincoln delivered that memorable speech.... But, son, you didn’t say it just like Lincoln did.

“You said, ‘Government of the people, by the people, and for the people.’ When Lincoln spoke these words ... he said, ‘Government of the people, by the people, and for the people.’ Your emphasis is on [the] prepositions [not on the people]!”⁴⁹

As believers, we too must remember not to focus upon things, places, or organizations but upon people. God commands it!

THEY aren't flashy. They aren't showy. But they are living proof that "he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:21).

The couple I have in mind have taken in teenage girls who could no longer live at home. They have helped pay tuition for students who couldn't afford it. They work tirelessly and humbly in music and children's activities. They give and give to others and never ask for anything in return. They have their own set of problems just like everyone else, but they never use them as excuses to stop loving other people.

This kind of lifestyle should characterize everyone who claims to know and love God. The apostle John said, "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (v. 20). But do we show love to others as we should?

Think about it. Do we encourage and build up others (1 Thessalonians 5:11) ? Help them materially (1 John 3:17) ? Sacrifice for them (1 John 3:16)? Refrain from gossiping about them, quarreling with them, and being angry with them (2 Corinthians 12:20)? Are we forgiving (Ephesians 4:32)? Nothing proves our love for God more than our love for others.—JDB (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, I think I have things reversed. It is easy for me to say "I love You" because You are not physically present to make demands on my time, energy, and resources. Yet You say I cannot love You if I do not love those who DO make demands of me. Help me to prove my love for You by doing loving things for others.

Porcupine People -

Deep in a Wyoming canyon I came across the biggest porcupine I've ever seen. As he lumbered toward me, I watched him closely and gave him plenty of room. I was not about to get near a guy whose quills looked like missiles. No wonder he was alone!

But he's not alone all the time. Every November and December, porcupines get close enough to produce offspring. During that time they choose to relax their quills, then they return to their prickly selves.

In nearly every church, there will be a porcupine or two, with sharp quills of criticism or sarcasm or arrogance. We want to avoid them, but God places us in communities of believers for fellowship. He commands us to love one another—including the porcupine types. And in our honest moments, we have to admit that we have quills too.

John wrote, "He who loves God must love his brother also" (1John 4:21). To do this, we need to ask God to help us "relax our quills," even when other people are prickly. The Holy Spirit will help us stop being so defensive or critical or controlling, and enable us to love our Christian brothers and sisters. It's the way we show the world that we love God (John 13:35). By David C. Egner

Some people can be difficult to love
And so we do not even try to care,
But God says, "Love them just as I've loved you—
You'll bring Me glory as My love you share."

God loves you and me-
Let's love each other.

The Measure Of Love -

While visiting a Christian's home, I saw these words displayed on a wall plaque: "You love Jesus only as much as you love the person you love the least." I squirmed at those revealing words. Later I found similar words in 1 John 4:20+, "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

After that I often caught myself criticizing others while overlooking my own glaring faults. If I loved Jesus only as much as I loved the people I criticized, then I loved Jesus very little. This grieved and frustrated me, as I seemed unable to love Jesus and others as I should.

In 1 John 4:10+, we learn that the key to knowing love isn't found in our love for God, but rather in His love for us. He showed the depth of His love in Jesus' sacrificial death for our sins. That's our example. "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1Jn 4:11+).

Now when I fail to love others, I seek God's forgiveness. I ask Him to help me show to others the kind of love He showed to me.

Do you long to love Jesus more? Start with loving the people around you. Remember, love for Jesus and love for others always go together. — By Joanie Yoder

Unfailing is God's matchless love,
So kind, so pure, so true;
And those who draw upon that love
Show Christ in all they do.
—D. De Haan

Love is God's will in action.

1 John 4:20 Commentary <> 1 John 5:1 Commentary