

GREATER BETHEL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

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BIBLE STUDY TOPIC: WHY WE MUST LOVE

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-11

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By way of introduction, note that while love is the *inevitable* result of being born of God, it is *not* the *automatic* result. John states (4:7), “**Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.**” If we are children of the One whose very nature is love, then we will be like our Father. But at the same time, John commands (4:11), “**Beloved, if God so loves us, we also ought to love one another.**” It is not automatic or effortless! There is always room for growth in love.

Love does not mean that we set aside the truth for the sake of unity. John was there when Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one, that the world would know that the Father sent Him (John 17:23). But he also heard Jesus pray, “**Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth**” (John 17:17).

There are doctrines where believing or rejecting them makes the difference between heaven and hell. On these issues, we must never compromise truth for the sake of love.

In **4:1-6**, John explains the first part of that commandment, namely, believing in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. Now, he turns to the **second part** of the commandment, the need to love one another.

1. We should love one another because God is love (4:7-8).

Our culture uses the word “**love**” in many ways: “I love pizza!” “I love the mountains!” “I love my children.” We need to remember the **biblical definition of love**. Based on several similar texts (John 3:16; 13:34; Eph. 5:2, 25; 1 John 4:9-10), I worked out this definition: ***Biblical love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.***

At its heart, biblical love is a **commitment**, and thus it may be commanded. But it is not a commitment without feeling, but a **caring** commitment. In other words, **biblical love involves delight, not just duty**. Also, this caring

commitment is not just an attitude, but an action: it shows itself in deeds. Those deeds often require self-sacrifice, seen supremely in Jesus' going to the cross. The goal of this commitment is the highest good of the one loved, which is that the person is saved and conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

A. God is the source of genuine love because it comes from His very nature.

John states (4:7) that, “**love is from God,**” and then he goes further and states (4:8) that, “**God is love.**”

John goes even further when he states, “**God is love.**” Some misconstrue it to mean that because God is love, He overlooks or is tolerant toward sin. But the Bible is clear that **God's love does not negate His holiness and justice**, or vice versa. In 1 John 1:5, the apostle stated, “**God is light, and in Him, there is no darkness at all.**” John also has said, “**He is righteous**” (2:29).

Cf. Revelation 20:15

B. God's true children display His nature.

John states this both positively and negatively (4:7-8): “**everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God....**” All that are born of God know God. The false teachers claimed to know God in a secret, deeper sense, but John is saying that they do not know God at all.

John's main application here is that **children take on the characteristics of their parents**.

Many in **evangelical churches claim to be born again**, but they do not love others and do not even try to do so. They are outside the life of God; ... there is no hope for such people unless they repent and turn to Him.”

2. God showed His love by sending His Son as the propitiation for our sins (4:9-10). John makes two points in verses 9-10:

A. God's love is seen in us in that He sent His Son so that we might live through Him (4:9).

John's point here seems to be that we, as God's born-again children, are Exhibit A of His great love that sent His only begotten Son to this wicked world.

Biblical Christianity is not primarily a matter of a person deciding to stop certain sinful practices and start doing morally acceptable practices. It is not

a matter of changing from being a non-religious person who spends Sundays for himself, to become a regular churchgoer. Rather, at its heart, **Biblical Christianity** is a matter of **God imparting new life to those who are dead in their sins** (Eph. 2:1-5).

B. Love is truly seen, not in our loving God, but in His loving us by sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (4:10).

John directs us back to God's love as seen in His sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "**Propitiation**" means to satisfy God's justice and wrath toward our sin. The initiative was *totally* with God! He didn't wait until we showed some promise of changing or until we cried out for help. Rather, as Paul put it (Rom. 5:8), "**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**"

3. Therefore, we ought to love one another (4:11).

"**Ought**" implies **obligation or commandment**. That love can be commanded shows that it is not primarily a feeling, but rather **an action based on commitment**. We must love others or we are being disobedient to God.

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 (Matt. 5:43-47).

Implicit in what John is saying here is that we must love those who may not be especially lovable or easy to love.