

Assurance

ASSURANCE TO BELIEVE GOD’S LOVE

Focal Verses • 1 JOHN 4:13–5:5

———— Aim for Change ————

By the end of the lesson, we will: **COMPREHEND** what is required to live in community; **SENSE** love within the community that exemplifies love and faith in God; and **CELEBRATE** the community’s contribution to our formation as disciples of Jesus.

———— In Focus ————

Whenever Breana got to church on Sunday morning, Brandon was right in her face. He was overbearing and hardly gave her space to talk to anyone else. Breana tolerated Brandon because

he was a member of her Sunday School class and a fellow brother in Christ. Though Breana appeared to be kind, inside, she was fuming with anger at Brandon's inability to take what she was sure were obvious clues—verbal and otherwise—that she was uncomfortable with his attentiveness.



Breana began to feel guilty about being nice to Brandon and then mocking him behind his back. Breana understood her behavior did not reflect the teachings of Christ, which meant loving our fellow brothers and sisters in the family of God.

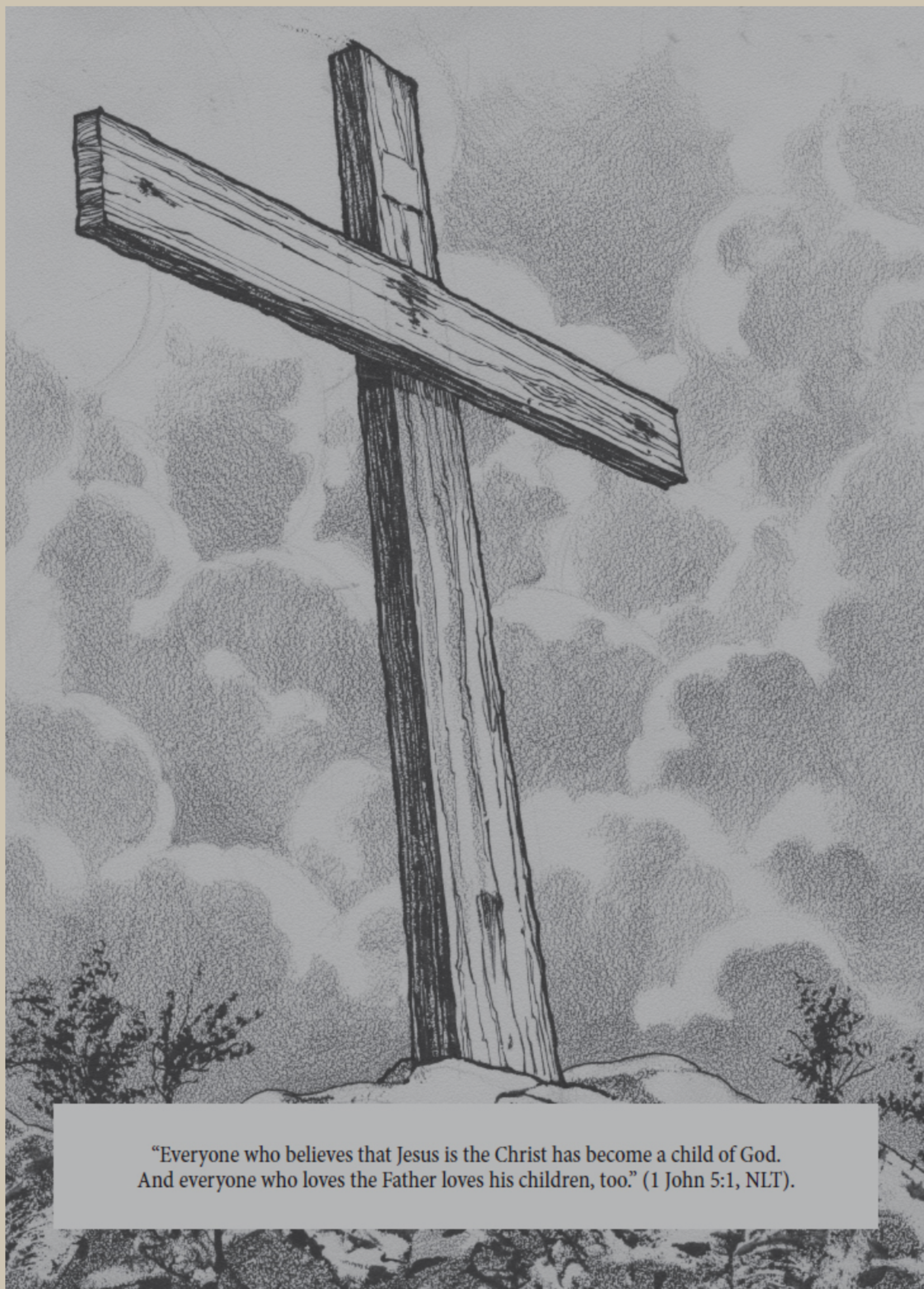
Therefore, Breana decided to lean on the assurance of God's word by being honest and forthright

with Brandon. Breana knew she needed to stop her cruel remarks about him to others. The following Sunday, Breana talked to Brandon and related her discomfort. She felt the resentment leave, replaced by a greater appreciation for Brandon, who graciously received her message and apologized for the discomfort.

If we cannot love our fellow Christians, who are visible, how can we love God who is invisible? In this week's lesson, we will learn how God's love is made real in our relationships with others. What assurance do we have from God to take the command to love fellow believers seriously?

Keep in Mind

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him” (1 John 5:1, KJV).



“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too.” (1 John 5:1, NLT).

KJV John 4:13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

NLT **John 4:13** And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.

14 Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

15 All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.

16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

18 Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

19 We love each other because he loved us first.

20 If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?

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

5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too.

2 We know we love God’s children if we love God and obey his commandments.

3 Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

4 For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith.

5 And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

The People, Places, and Times

John. The writer of the book of 1 John is thought to be John the apostle. John, along with his brother James, was a fisherman until he was called by Jesus to join the other eleven disciples. For three years, he followed and learned from Christ. John, along with Peter and James, was a part of Jesus' inner circle. In his self-titled Gospel, he refers to himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). After Pentecost, John was said to have led the church in Ephesus and eventually was exiled

during the reign of Domitian to the island of Patmos. He is known as the one apostle who died a natural death, although it is also reported that he was thrown into a pot of boiling oil.

Day of Judgment. This judgment refers to the final and ultimate judgment of God. It involves the final appearance of Christ when He judges the actions of all humankind. This phrase finds its roots in the Old Testament concept of the Day of the Lord. The Hebrews believed this would be the day when God would judge the nations and vindicate His people. In the New Testament, it loses its nationalistic tone and refers to God's solemn condemnation of all evil. On that day, Christians will inherit eternal life and unbelievers the ill-fated choice of eternal damnation (hell).

Background

The letters of John are three brief epistles. The succinctness is misleading, for they deal with insightful and significant questions about the fundamental nature of the Christian spiritual experience. The Johannine letters also provide a fascinating insight into the condition of the church at the end of the first century. Heresy played a critical and deceptive role in the church. Autonomy and church organization are reflected. The genuine nature of a committed and obedient relationship with God through Christ is strongly and affectionately depicted and commanded.

In his first epistle, John described how love is evidence of our relationship to God (1 John 4:14–21). The present assurance is so obvious that even the fear of Judgment Day is eliminated (vv. 17–18). In the final chapter, John turned to the interrelationship of love and righteousness. Those who are born

of God do not find His commandments to be troublesome (5:3). The faith of the children of God gives them power to discover victory over the world that would obstruct the execution of commands (v. 4). That faith rests in Jesus as the Son of God (v. 5). Again, accurate belief enters the picture: Jesus was fully human (v. 6) and the Spirit bears witness to the reality of Jesus (vv. 7–8). The result is a great inner confidence that God “has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (from v. 11, NLT). Again, the line of demarcation between the one who has life and the one who does not is made crystal clear (v. 12).

At-A-Glance

- 1. Living Proof (1 John 4:13–17)
- 2. Loving Proof (vv. 18–19)
- 3. Lasting Proof (4:20–5:5)

In Depth

1. Living Proof (1 John 4:13–17)

All Christians receive the Holy Spirit as living proof of God's presence in our lives. The Holy Spirit gives us power to love and confess Jesus Christ as Lord, and provides assurance that we are connected to our Heavenly Father. Perfect love does not mean we love perfectly; it is a description of our Savior's love for us. Jesus loves flawlessly because He accepts us with all our imperfections and mistakes, regardless of our gender, sex, race, marital, educational, or economic status, physical, mental, or emotional qualities, age, or cultural background. He loves us! Knowing we are loved by God diminishes our apprehension of Judgment Day, increases our need to see others saved, and supplies us freedom to love indiscriminately and do the work God called us to do. The confidence we receive in acknowledging God's love is not arrogant. Arrogance is when we depend

on and boast about our own abilities. The confidence that the Bible describes is a declaration of our relationship with Jesus and evidence of the abiding Holy Spirit within us.

2. Loving Proof (vv. 18–19)

The love of God eradicates all fear. If we operate from fear, it is a sign that we have not fully grasped the concept of God's unconditional love. Many Christians function in fear and live as prisoners of anxiety, even though the Lord cannot use us when we walk in apprehension. If we fear Judgment Day, are we certain of our salvation? There needs to be a level of confidence in knowing we are saved and eternally secure with Christ.

We cannot explain why God loves us; He just does! It is human nature to want justification for our feelings and actions; however, the Bible tells us Jesus loved us before

we became Christians (Romans 5:8). So if a sovereign God can love imperfect people, then who are we to refuse to love another imperfect being? Christians have experienced the fullness of Christ's love and have testimonies of His kindness. The greatest tragedy is to hoard the love of God and miss opportunities to pour this precious gift into the lives of others.

3. Lasting Proof (4:20–5:5)

John's emphasis on loving others is nowhere more clearly reflected than in this passage of Scripture. We are lying if we say we love God but actually hate our brothers and sisters in Christ. Many Bible teachers skate over these verses because they are too direct. Yet, these verses force us to examine our actions. How can we claim to love the invisible Lord and still be seen to hate the visible inhabitants of His kingdom? We cannot love God apart from loving

one another. How we treat each other is in direct correlation with how much we love God. This principle should alter the way we view the body of Christ. Our love for God confirms our love for others; if we love the Father, we must love our siblings. This sounds simple; however, it is not always an easy task. Still, loving others is not an option; it is a commandment. The commandments of God are not burdensome when we rely on the Holy Spirit to love through us. The world is full of evil, yet we have total victory when we believe in the name of Jesus and trust God to fight our battles for us.

Search the Scriptures

1. How do we know God lives in us (1 John 4:13)?
2. What gives proof that we love God (vv. 16–17)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why is it important that we love one another?

2. Why do we fear judgment or punishment from God?

3. How is God's love made perfect?

Liberating Lesson

Society teaches us to love conditionally. Some people live in fear of rejection from those who claim to love them. This is not real love. One of the most remarkable attributes of God is His ability to love unconditionally and completely. No matter what we face in life, God's love is everlasting, and nothing can separate us from His love! Not only do we have God's promise of love but also the promise of eternal life. With this kind of reassurance, what keeps us from loving others?

Application for Activation

The Lord has high regard for the community of believers, and we should, too. All we can do is learn to love and obey God’s command. Pray and ask God to reveal where you can extend love to someone in the family of God. After God shows you, act! Write in a journal about how the incident impacted your life and share your experience with the class.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 John 4:13–5:5

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

Two themes dominate John's exhortation in verses 13–21: faith and love. In verse 13, John affirms that the assurance of the presence of God in the life of a Christian (cf. vv. 12, 15) is proved by the residence of the Holy Spirit in him or her. Since love is the first of the fruit produced by the Spirit, John's connection of love with the Holy Spirit is obvious, in addition to the other work of the Spirit in the life of a believer.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Although no one has seen God, He has revealed Himself visibly in His Son Jesus Christ. As one of the apostolic

eyewitnesses, John bears testimony to this fact (cf. 1:1–3). The Greek word *soter* (soh-TARE), which means savior or deliverer, defines both the purpose and the result of Christ's mission (cf. Matthew 1:21; John 1:29).

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

Emphasis is placed on the test of (doctrinal) faith in Christ as evidence of God's indwelling. The Greek word *homologeō* (ho-mo-lo-GEH-oh, confess) indicates that confession involves the intellectual acknowledgment of the human-divine nature of Christ and a personal acceptance of Him.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

John effectively connects faith with works (action). Belief must find expression in behavior. Here, believing and loving are intimately joined. They are proof of God's Spirit in the believer.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

By dwelling in love and consequently in God, and by God dwelling in us, love will be made perfect (Gk. *teleioo*, teh-lay-OH-oh, to complete or accomplish). This word refers to the completion of a goal or maturity. Love will be made complete, mature, and perfect once and for all in us. This perfection refers to a complete, fully accomplished state. John is stating that the ongoing action of God's

dwelling in us and our dwelling in God perfects our love. The phrase “because as he is, so are we in this world” refers to God’s abiding in us (v. 16). If we dwell in God and God in us, despite being in this imperfect world, we are like God, who is love. This should give us confidence on the Day of Judgment, which comes from loving as Jesus loved us. It does not mean that we will love perfectly, but that we will have evidence that we are believers, and we will have confidence that our hearts are right before God.

John then goes on further to clarify that love is absent of fear. Mature and complete love casts out all fear. The word for “casteth out” literally means to lay or throw aside something. Christians should not experience fear of punishment in their life. The punishment that John refers to is the judgment, which is clear because it is mentioned in the

context of the Day of Judgment. Because fear has punishment (the two are inevitably intertwined), the person who fears punishment does not have the love in verses 16–17. The same Greek verb appears again here as “perfect” (*teleioo*), confirming the connection. John seals his point by stating that whoever fears has not matured in love. Those who fear that they will receive the final judgment have not experienced the complete work of God’s love in their life.

19 We love him, because he first loved us. 20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Next we see the motivation behind the Christian’s love. It is because we have experienced the love of God in Jesus Christ. This verse points to the

detailed description and explanation of the preceding verses. It summarizes what John has said concerning the love of Christ and its effect on the life of a believer. We love God because He has shown His love to us in Christ. We love one another because we have experienced God's love in our hearts.

John says that if believers say they love God and hate their brother, they are more than walking contradictions: they are liars. This may not mean they are intentionally deceiving others. At the most basic level, they are deceiving themselves. They are not walking consistent with the truth. Those who do not love someone who is physically visible to them cannot love God, who is invisible to their natural senses. For John, the real test of true love is loving those who are right in front of you. Loving people whom you can see is the litmus test of loving the God whom you cannot see.

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Not only is loving your brother a litmus test for loving God, but not loving your brother is disobedience to the Lord's command. John appeals to the direct command of Jesus (John 13:34). If we do not love our brother, we are not obeying the command of Jesus. Jesus has given us this command, and Christians must fulfill it or risk disobeying the Lord who loves them.

1 John 5:1–5

This Scripture passage is a part of John's final elaboration of the three principle tests of authentic Christianity: belief (faith), righteousness (obedience), and love. He has devoted sections of his letter to treating the subjects in turn. Here, all three are closely related, integrated, and woven together into one

theological fabric, within the overriding idea of Christian confidence and assurance through the new birth. The text shows the Christian's confidence in victory, witnesses, eternal life, and prayer.

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

John connects belief and love mutually and spiritually. The Greek word *pisteuo* (pees-TEW-oh) means to trust or to believe. It is more than a mere profession of a creed; it means personal faith in and personal union with Christ. Our proof of the new birth is shown as a continual belief in the humanity and deity of Christ and His redemptive mission. The logical consequence of the new birth is an expression of love for God, who is the source of the spiritual birth, as well

as for all others He has given spiritual birth.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

In the preceding verse, John connects belief and love. In this verse and the next, the connection is made between love and obedience (righteousness), indicating how intertwined the themes are. John reverses the relationship by stating that our love for one another is made manifest when we love God and keep His commandments. Previously John declared that we cannot love God if we hate one another. Now John is saying that loving God reveals our love for one another. The two are intimately related, so both should flow from each other.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

John takes a step further to link love and obedience. This verse is obviously an echo of the precept of Christ Himself: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (from John 14:15, 21). Love for God is both a basis and motivation for obedience. The Greek word *barus* (ba-ROOS), translated as “grievous,” also carries the idea of something difficult or burdensome. For example, some of the regulations of the scribes and the Pharisees were heavy burdens hard to bear. Jesus’ yoke, on the contrary, is easy and His burden light (Matthew 11:30). Furthermore, divine resources are made available to equip Christians to do the will of God. John directly references the impartation of divine nature and the

indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in all who have been born of God (see 1 John 3:24).

4 For whatsoever is born of God over-cometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

John's confidence in the believer's victory is contagious. Within two verses, he uses the words "overcome" and "victory" four times (vv. 4–5). The Greek verb *nikao* (nee-KAH-oh) means to conquer, to overcome, or to prevail, while its related noun *nike* (NEE-kay) means victory or conquest. Anything that has been born of God conquers the world, but here John focuses on our faith as the victory that has already conquered the world. John uses a present tense verb to begin with because there are always obstacles to

face in this world, but in talking of faith, he uses a verb that expresses certainty that our faith is complete in its victory. The way might not be full of roses, yet the Christian life is one of victory from start to finish, not a life of defeat, discouragement, or dread.

Two aspects of the believers' conquest are implied in these verses. First, Christ's victory becomes the believers' own upon their belief in the person and work of Christ, acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior by faith, and consequent union with Christ (cf. John 1:12, 16:33). Second, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to live in daily victory over the flesh, the world, and the devil. In everyday experience, the Christian can constantly express thanks to God, "which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (from 1 Corinthians 15:57; cf. 1 John 4:4; Romans 8:37). The person who is born

of God is born to win; he or she does not live like a coward or become dominated and defeated by circumstances. The born-again believer lives confidently by faith and has complete trust in God from victory to victory. God's promises are never realized by the fearful but given to those who are overcomers and conquerors through Jesus Christ (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11, KJV).

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Say It Correctly
Johannine. joe-HA-nine.
Grievous. GREE-vus.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 344

1 Thessalonians 4–5
Proverbs 22

DAY 345

2 Thessalonians 1–3
Proverbs 23

DAY 346

1 Timothy 1–6
Proverbs 24

DAY 347

2 Timothy 1–4
Proverbs 25

DAY 348

Titus 1–3
Proverbs 26

DAY 349

Philemon 1:1–25
Proverbs 27

DAY 350

Hebrews 3–4
Proverbs 28

Notes