

SESSION 5

SURE OF GOD'S LOVE

Leader pages on pp. 120-123

THE POINT:
GOD'S LOVE IS SEEN
WHEN WE LOVE
OTHERS AS HE HAS
LOVED US.

1 JOHN 4:7-13, 19-21

MEMORY VERSE

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

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¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us. ¹³ This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.

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¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

KEYWORDS

God is love (v. 8)—This phrase does not mean that love is God. Love is an attribute of God, like righteousness and goodness.

Live through Him (v. 9)— This means not just biological existence, but the spiritual high road of eternal life.

Atoning sacrifice (v. 10)—Jesus satisfied God's demand for sin. The standard of love is not what humans feel but what God has revealed in Christ's life and death on the cross.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GOD'S LOVE?

Last year America launched into a season of chaos in the streets. Peaceful protests for Black Lives Matter exploded into violent mobs. And this January as U.S. senators were in the process of affirming electoral votes from the 2020 presidential election, a riot broke out within the very walls of the nation's capital. This marked a dark day in U.S. history. People died in both of these chaotic events.

Some people may wonder where God is in all this. Others are tempted to question God's goodness. The presence of human hatred, however, in no way negates God's goodness and love. Hate will not last forever, but God's love is everlasting. Love can and will prevail over a world filled with so much hatred.

This love does not match the world's concept of love. God's love was on display when He gave His Son to die on the cross for the sins of the world. (See John 3:16). We don't deserve it, but He loves us anyway. God's love abides forever, and He wants us to be sure of His love for us.

We Know God Is Love

// 1 John 4:7-10

John had already spoken twice on the theme of love in this epistle (1 John 2:7-11; 3:11-18). Now he was dealing with the topic for the third time. When Scripture addresses a matter even once it is important, but when God inspires the biblical writers to address a topic repeatedly, we should really sit up and take notice!

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE LOVE IN THESE VERSES?

Love is the very nature of God. The apostle John wrote, "Love is from God," (v. 7) and love comes from God "because God is love" (v. 8). Love is not just another attribute among many; rather, it is God's very nature from which all other attributes proceed. To this point, John Stott wrote, "It is true that the words 'God is love' mean not that loving is 'only one of God's many activities' but rather that 'all his activity is loving activity' and that, therefore, 'if He judges, He judges in love.'"⁸ This certainly does not



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mean God condones sin, but in love, He has exposed it and sent His Son to die for sin's penalty.

Christians should know God loves them because “God sent his one and only Son into the world” to save them. We have already seen that the origin of love is God. Therefore, Christ is the manifestation of God's love. God manifested His love for us by sending His Son to pay our sin debt. The greatness of God's love is observed in the value of the gift: God gave “his one and only Son.” The Greek word used here for only Son is *monogenes*, the same word used to describe Abraham's offering up his only son Isaac. (See Heb. 11:17).

God spared Abraham's son, but He did not spare His own Son on the cross. He “sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (v. 10). The Father willingly gave His Son to die in our place, and Jesus willingly took the punishment for our sins upon Himself.

God's children have no reason to be uncertain regarding God's love for them, especially when that love was displayed so clearly on the cross. We can't receive salvation without putting our faith and trust in Christ; we cannot put our trust in Him without knowing what He did for us on the cross; and we can't appreciate what Christ did for us on the cross without also seeing God's sacrificial love for us. Since God loved us in this way, we know He withholds no good thing (see Psalm 84:11) from us as His adopted children. You can be sure of God's love!

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES GOD'S LOVE MAKE IN YOUR LIFE COMPARED TO OTHER LOVES?

We Must Love One Another // 1 John 4:11-13

We have already seen in verse 7 the command to “love one another.” John repeated it twice more in verses 11-12. With this call to love comes great responsibility. We are to love others as God has loved us. God has loved us with a changeless, self-sacrificing love. God still loves us in the same way today, and He seeks to display that love through us.

As we saw in verses 8-9, God revealed His love when His Son, Jesus, became the sacrifice for our sins. He took away our sin, but He didn't just take away the bad; He gave to us as



DIGGING DEEPER TYPES OF LOVE

The Bible speaks of different types of love. They are identified as *Eros*, *Storge*, *Philia*, and *Agape*. *Eros* is the Greek word for romantic love. This is love reserved for marriage. Paul stated in I Corinthians 7:8-9 that it is better to marry than to burn with desire. This love is ordained by God. *Storge* is a Greek word that describes family love. The love that Isaac had for his son Joseph is one example. *Philia* love is the type of love believers should have towards one another. Romans 12:10 tells believers to show brotherly affection to one another. *Agape* is the highest type of love which describes God's unconditional love for us. John 3:16 tells us that He loved us so much that He gave His only son so that we would have eternal life.

How can we overcome those things that prevent us from loving God and others as we should?

well: He gave us life, “that we might live through him” (v. 9). We are to live in Him and through Him, which means we are to allow others to see His love in and through us. To love with God's love gives evidence that we have a relationship with the One who displays His love through us. To state that negatively: the one who does not love does not know God.

WHY DOES GOD'S LOVE FOR US COMPEL US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER?

The key to loving others is in loving God. The more we love God, the more of God's love will flow out of us toward others. Picture a garden hose attached to the outdoor faucet of a house. When the faucet is turned on, the water flows. The hose doesn't produce the water; it is only the conduit for the water to freely flow. In ourselves, we might find it difficult to love—especially to love unconditionally, as God loves—but when we are “attached” to Him (remaining in Christ) His love flows freely through us.

Although “no one has ever seen God,” (v. 12) believers reveal God through the way they love one another. The very fact that “we love one another” (v. 12) serves as evidence that “God remains in us” (v. 12). We see a perfection, a completion to love when this happens. We embrace God's love, He comes to live in us, and His love pours out of us as we love others. And the mutual love brothers and sisters in Christ display reveals God's love to the world. (See John 13:35). We point to Christ, and those around us also have the opportunity to embrace the love of Christ.

Our love for others is proof of God's love in us. Love is the fruit of His indwelling Spirit. God is perfect in His love; He lacks nothing. But God's “love is made complete” (v. 12) only when that love flows through us. He has chosen to use His people as channels of His love. We are to

present ourselves to Him daily as instruments of His self-sacrificing, continual love. Therefore, when we love others, we cooperate with God's redemptive plan for the world so that others can be sure of God's love for them.



We Must Not Hate // 1 John 4:19-21

John left no gray areas, nor did he sugar-coat his words! “If anyone says, ‘I love God’ and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar” (v. 20). A true Christian will not be filled with selfish hatred toward another brother or sister in Christ. A true Christian cannot hate another believer because God's Spirit abides in him. It is an utter impossibility. To claim faith in Christ while harboring hate is a complete insult to the character of God. God is love.

To further stress this truth, John said, “For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (v. 20). John's statements strike to the core of the issue. Of course, some would say it's easier to love God because “he first loved us.” However, John argued just the opposite. Logically, it's easier to show love to people who are visibly present, rather than God, who is invisible (John 4:24). A failure to love

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people whom we can see is a failure to love God whom we cannot see—and a failure to love is hate.

WHAT STEPS CAN WE TAKE TO OBEY THESE VERSES IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES?

We are to walk in love. Our lives ought to be characterized by daily, tangible acts of kindness. To love someone is to seek after their highest good. Love overcomes hate. With so much hate in the world today, it is paramount that Christians love one another. But our love should not stop with other Christians. Love must go out into the world and seek to win the lost to Christ. Christ came in human flesh because He loved us (see John 3:16). He gave His life out of love for the lost, and we are to follow His example. We are to love the sinner. We are to love the broken. We are to love the needy. We are to love “the least of these” (Matt. 25:45).

Commit to love like Christ, who unselfishly gave His life for others. Strive to love like the four men who did whatever it took to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus (see Luke 5:17-26). Practice love like the Good Samaritan who willingly gave to

meet the needs of a stranger (see Luke 10:30-35). This kind of love changes the world. And let's help others be sure of God's love for them.

DID YOU KNOW?

Thomas Dorsey was the son of a Baptist preacher and his mother was an organist. After playing in secular venues and experiencing several breakdowns, he finally submitted to God and started composing gospel music. In 1932, his wife and son died during childbirth. It is during this time that he composed his most famous song, “Take My Hand, Precious Lord.” He went on to help found the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses in 1933. Dorsey, called the father of gospel music, wrote over 400 compositions. His songs have been recorded by Elvis Presley, Pat Boone, Aretha Franklin, Little Richard, and B.B. King, among many others. During the 1980s, he was honored so often with honorary doctorates that he came to be known as Dr. Thomas A. Dorsey.

What does the title “Take My Hand, Precious Lord” say about God's love?

LIVE IT

How will you love others?

God's love is powerful. According to Romans 8:38-39 there is nothing we can do to cause Him to stop loving us. Because of our salvation, God's love resides inside of us. But we should not keep it to ourselves. The reality of God's love is the way He transforms us to love others as He does. He loves us so much that He gave His Son to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Share God's love by doing the following:

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- **Pray in love.** Identify someone you know who is struggling right now. Spend time praying for that person this week.
- **Act in love.** Write someone a note; give of your time; drop off dinner; do something that says you care without actually using the words.
- **Reach out in love.** Share a meal with someone you don't know well who has a different background, culture, or belief system than you. Spend time getting to know him or her on a more significant level.

DAILY READINGS

1. I PROMISE // 2 CHRONICLES 6:14

We all have heard someone say the words, “I promise.” In essence, they are saying, “if you do this for me, then I promise I will do this for you.” As with many promises, sometimes they don’t come into fruition. Most people have every intent to keep their promises, but as life would have it, they break them. People fall short in this area. But it is comforting to know that God always keeps His promises. King Solomon understood God as a promise keeping God. He said God would keep His covenant of love with His people. The only prerequisite was that Israel would “continue wholeheartedly” in obedience to God. God’s Word still rings true for us.

He will shower us with His steadfast love if we will walk in obedience before Him.

2. MY PROTECTOR // PSALM 91

There are many ways a mother hen will cherish and protect her chicks. One way is to droop her wings so the chicks can creep under them. The hen protects her baby chicks this way. She just covers them with her wings. David understood the value of God’s love and protection. He wrote that God would cover you with “His wings.” David had many enemies and needed God’s care. He knew that God’s grace and mercy were precious, yet intimate attributes. Through God’s mercy, he could find rest and refuge. As our Protector, God will also carry us through all our fears in life. We only need to trust that He will see us through. Being under the shadow of His wings can bring comfort to each of us. God’s love means protection and rest.

It is good to know God is our refuge.

3. FAITHFUL LOVE // MICAH 7:18

The song titled, “Who Wouldn’t Serve a God Like This?” speaks of all the good things God can and has done for us. There is no one like Him. He is mighty and powerful, yet loving. Nothing can

compare to His faithful love. As sinners, we don’t deserve to be pardoned by Him. But God through His grace forgives our sins. He removes our sins as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). Our sin has been taken away and placed on Christ. No one can forgive like our Father in heaven. Why? Because He is a God of love.

“Who wouldn’t serve a God like this?”

4. OH, TO BE KEPT // 1 PETER 1:4-5

“Oh, to be kept by Jesus.” These are familiar lyrics to a popular Christian hymn with the same title. The song simply emphasizes we have security in Jesus. We are saved by His Holy keeping. Through Him we have an incorruptible inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us. But while we are on earth, we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. When we mess up, He remains faithful to us. Nothing can change our destination. He assures us in His Word that heaven is our real home. I don’t know of anyone that can make that guarantee.

This is a promise that can only be guaranteed by our Savior. Oh, to be kept by Jesus.

5. ARE YOU LISTENING? // JOHN 10:27-28

Sheep are interesting animals. They are meek, quiet, and gentle. But they are also mindless. Left to themselves, they will not and cannot last very long. They must have a shepherd to care for them. Sheep will listen for and obey their shepherd. People are like sheep. We too have the propensity to wander or stray. However, we have a Shepherd who is Christ to lead and guide us through this life. If we follow Him, we will not perish and no one can take us from our Shepherd—not even our enemy who is Satan. So rest assured, even though the earth is the devil’s domain, he cannot harm or take away our souls. Our Shepherd will protect and sustain us throughout eternity. We only need to remain close to Him and listen for and obey His voice.

We have an assurance in our salvation.

HOW ARE WE VICTORIOUS BECAUSE OF CHRIST?

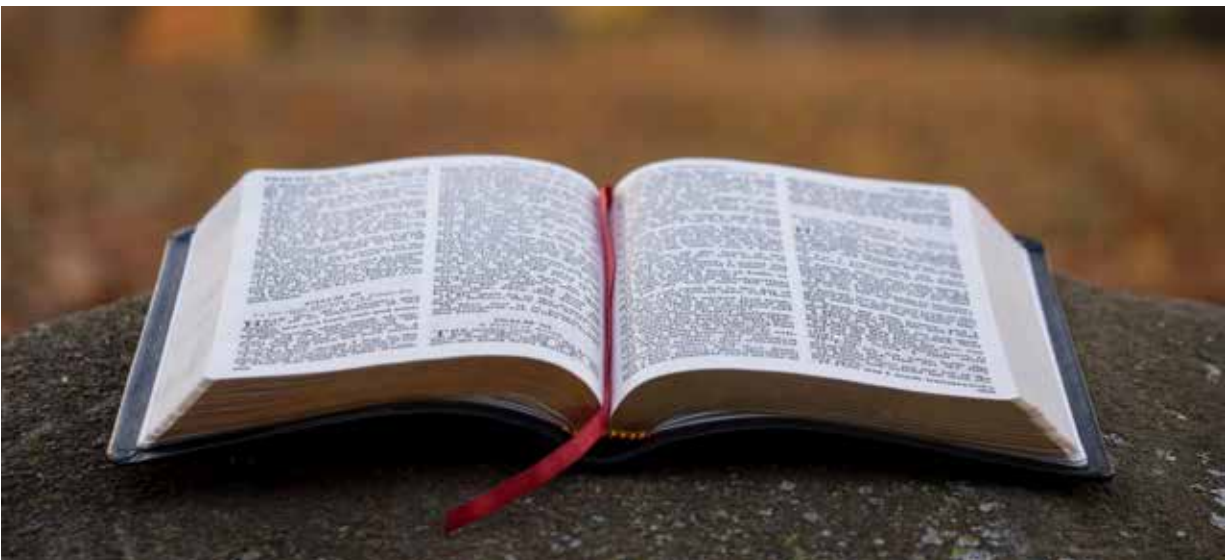
When I was a little boy, my uncles raised cattle. I can remember sitting on the tailgate of the old farm truck watching two of their bulls fighting. They seemed mismatched since one was a young bull and the other was old. The younger bull may have been quicker, but the older bull was bigger. After pawing the ground and throwing dirt in the air, the two bulls put their heads together and began to shove. Most of the time, the older bull won, but the younger bull would get the best of him on a few occasions.

When I look at the current condition of our world, I see a similar picture of righteousness fighting against wickedness. There is a constant shoving match between the two. If you draw your information solely from the news media, then darkness seems to be winning. But when you read the Bible, you discover the opposite is true. Darkness may seem to be winning, but it has already been defeated. Jesus has won the victory, and His followers are on the winning side. We have the ultimate “comeback story” because of Jesus!

Victory over Doubt // 1 John 3:19-22

In the previous verses, John has been teaching on our responsibility to love one another. Love is proof of genuine salvation (see 1 John 3:14), which in turn assures our hearts before God. Sadly, we have times in our lives when we don't love as we should. When this happens, a sense of failure can set into our minds causing us to feel condemned before God, which in turn can fill us with doubt. Such doubt can be debilitating at times and render us unable to move forward.

Apparently, John's readers were struggling with doubt. For this reason, John wrote to reassure their hearts: “before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things” (vv. 19-20). Praise be unto God! He looks beyond our failures to the true intent of the heart. We can wrongly see ourselves through the lens of self-condemnation, but God sees us through Christ's righteousness. (See 2 Cor. 5:21). It is good to know that when we trust the finished





My Notes

Name

Email

Session Number

Answer 4 Questions

What did You learn?

What Is God saying to you?

What are you gonna do about it?

**Do you have any questions
about the reading?**





My Notes

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