

# Series: The Confident, Loving Church – week 20

**CDOBC – beginning on 2/14/10**

Title: **“The Love of God”**

*1 John 4:7-12 ~ August 8, 2010*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To renew our reasons and desire to love one another.

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## Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- AWANA – leaders needed – leader / worker meeting 8/11 – 6:30 p.m.
- Wycliffe Conf. childcare need
- Quarterly Business mtg. 8-15 – after 2<sup>nd</sup> service
- Waypoint Theatre – C.S. Lewis Screwtape Letters – afternoon of 8/15 – see insert
- All-church social at the YMCA – 8/29
- Summer BBQ's – Aug. 14, Aug. 21

Love has been a fascination for every generation – no matter their culture or the era they lived in. In my own era – and I'll date myself here a bit – I grew up with:

“The Love Boat” – who could forget Capt. Stubing and Isaac!

“Love Potion #9” by the Clovers

“Love American Style”

“Love Songs” – entire radio stations dedicate their air time to a rotation of love songs.

Valentines Day

Our culture craves love – but we usually crave love for our own advantage. But God calls us to a greater love.

## **Turn to 1 John 4:7-8**

In this section we are looking at this morning, John gives us three reasons why we should love one another.

Read vs. 7-8

## **Love each other because of God's nature.** vs. 7-8

Preaching about love and talking about love is popular in most religious circles today – Christian or not. ‘Loving

others' is an ethic that almost everyone agrees upon. In fact, even those who claim to have atheistic views usually hold to a 'love others' ethic. However, if you did a little deeper with most people, you soon discover that their 'love others' ethic is rooted in veiled selfishness (Love is given if they receive something in return.) or love is given to those who either agree with them or those who can help them in some way.

John tells us at the beginning of vs. 7 that love is not a human invention – but it's something that originated from God Himself.

God is the *origin* of love.

But, this presents a problem for some. If this is true, then how do we explain those instances where we see love among non-believers? In fact, when we are honest with ourselves, we sometimes see love practiced more among non-believers than between some Christians! How can this be?

The answer lies in two areas of theology. **First**, since all of us are created in the image of God, all people – regardless of their faith or lack of faith in Christ – have this divine quality of love within them. **Second**, we believe in what is called "Common Grace". Meaning, that God doesn't withhold good things from nonbelievers. He gives grace to all. The only grace excluded from this is in regard to sin – but He is gracious to all of humanity.

"...He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Matt. 5:45

At the end of vs. 7, as he has done throughout the letter, John connects loving each other with salvation ("...has been born of God..."). Also – notice that he links knowledge of God with loving others. This is important – because so many people today – like the Gnostics of the first century – elevate

knowing God, especially in some mystical or special knowledge of God – above loving others. But the Apostle John is clear - some sort of mystical or experiential form of ‘knowing God’ is not more important – it’s not a higher level of spirituality than loving others. In fact, one of the ways we can tell if someone truly knows God (as opposed to knowing about God) is how they love others!

As he often does, John emphasizes his point by stating the opposing view / action. In vs. 8, he says that the person who doesn’t love doesn’t know God! This is a strong statement to those who claim to know God – they have all the facts in their head – maybe they can recite the right beliefs and the historic creeds – but that doesn’t mean they know God as their Savior! If they don’t love others, then their lack of true belief is revealed. The reason for this is given at the end of the verse:

God is love.

This is one of the greatest and clearest statements about the nature of God in Scripture. It’s also a three word description of the Gospel.

The power of this – in the context – is that if someone claims to know God – yet does not practice love for others – they cannot possibly know God because God ***is*** love! Love is an essential part of God’s nature. The attributes of God are many – John has told us earlier that God is light (1 John 1:5), He is Spirit (John 4:24) – and now he tells us that God is love. If you claim to know God – then you must love others since love is part of God’s ‘DNA’. Everything God does is related to His love. You can’t separate the love of God from any of His actions throughout history.

Before I move to the second point this morning, I need to address the confusion or question that some have in regard to the love of God. They struggle primarily because of three things: **1)** They read through some passages in the O.T. and see the killing that was ordained and empowered by God **2)** They see suffering and injustice in the world **3)** They consider the reality and eternity of Hell.

Many see a contradiction between these things and the claim that God is love. On the surface, their concern seems to have merit. Admittedly, there are a few questions we have in this area that are difficult to mesh – but these honestly held protests reveal a lack in understanding the depth of human sinfulness and God’s holiness, purity, and justice. We never see sin on the same level of severity and effect as God does – and we never see God’s holiness, purity, and justice in their absolute perfection. We simply cannot fathom the levels at which these attributes exist. We see good works and pat ourselves or the other person on the back and praise their work. God sees those things and understands our sin that surrounds them and infiltrates them. “...and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags...” Isaiah 64:6

If you have these questions and struggle with these issues, I would recommend to you “Making Sense our of Suffering”, by Peter Kreeft, “How Could God Allow Suffering and Evil”, by Gary Poole, “If God is Good” by Randy Alcorn, “When Life if Hard”, by James McDonald, “When God Doesn’t Make Sense” by Dr. James Dobson

## **Love each other because God sent Jesus as our sin sacrifice.** vs. 9-10

In the next two verses, John reminds us of the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever known.

### **Read vs. 9-10**

The purposeful incarnation of Christ was God’s greatest expression of love. In order to secure our life – He sent His

son to die. A commentator that I use in preparation said if God had sent His Son to teach us about Himself that would have been wonderful. If He would have sent His Son to show us how to live – that would have been even better. But God did so much more than those two things! He sent His Son to die for us – and in the process to make it possible for us to have His life in us! (The Epistles of John, by James Montgomery Boice, p. 115)

What makes this even greater is that He did this when we were His enemies. He sent His Son – He expressed His love – when we were disinterested in Him! Our lack of love and our rebellion toward Him did not discourage His abundant, generous, and long-suffering love toward us.

This is why Paul, in Ephesians 5:25, commands husbands to love their wives in this way. Too often, in our human relationships, we give love when it's easy to give it – or we give love when it's safe – or we give love when it's in our best interest or when it will give us something in return. However, this is sinful – this is love polluted – and it ends up hurting others and cheapening others. Pure love – the love of God – is sacrificial.

F.F. Bruce says, *“The love which the N.T. enjoins involves a consuming passion for the well-being of others, and this love has it's wellspring in God.”* (The Gospel & Epistles of John, by F. F. Bruce, p. 107)

Some people struggle with the love of God in the cross. Their struggle is not in what God did for us – but in the love He has for His Son. This question is rooted in a lesser view of love – and an incomplete understanding of the Triune God. To thoroughly deal with this objection would take more time than we have here this morning. Let me know if you wish to talk through this issue. For now - let me read a quote from the New International Commentary:

*“...love means forgiving the sins of the beloved and remembering them no more...He pardons their sins against Himself at His own cost...the depth of God’s love is to be seen precisely in the way in which it bears the wounds inflicted on it by mankind and offers full and free pardon.”*

(New International Commentary on the New Testament, by I. Howard Marshall, p. 215)

## **Love each other because God still loves us. vs. 11-12**

John points out (vs. 11) God’s love in the past – expressed through His Son – which he says should spur us on to love one another in like fashion. But he also points out (in vs. 12) the present work of God in our life – through the Holy Spirit (“...God lives in us...”).

Now vs. 12 has all sorts of application for us today.

Why does John seemingly switch gears from the topic of love – to the idea of seeing God? One reason is that the Gnostics may have been claiming to have experienced some sort of epiphany – a vision of God in which they claimed to have received some sort of special divine revelation. If they were claiming this, John contradicts their claim by stating that nobody has seen God. His comment would refer to God the Father – and his comment on this matter would reinforce his and the other Apostles unique knowledge of Christ and the Gospel of Christ they had passed on.

However, there is a more important reason why John talks about seeing God. The way God intends to be seen by the world is through the love Christians express to each other and the love they express to the world.

*“The love of God displayed in His people is the strongest apologetic that God has in the world.”* (The Gospel & Epistles of John, by F.

F. Bruce, p. 109)

God's life in us is best displayed as we love each other. When you think about, it's pretty frightening and humbling to realize that we are God's commercial to the world! What kind of commercial are you? A boring, obnoxious commercial which makes people grab the remote and change the channel – or are you a Super Bowl commercial? Are you one that entices people and causes them to develop an interest in the things of God?

A second detail he tells us is that in our love for one another – we are made complete/perfect. It's not that loving others is more important than our morality – but our love for God and our love for others will lead to moral, Godly behavior. If we love others, we will speak truthfully to them, we won't gossip about them, we won't betray their trust; we will serve them and seek their interests.

## **Application**

Love one another

Close in prayer