

Introduction: How much does God love us?

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

1 John 3:1a

What kind of love comes from God?

Agape – Divine, giving, and unselfish love

Two ways God give us His love:

1. It is given **SACRIFICIALLY**.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

2. It is given **UNCONDITIONALLY**.

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

God's love is boundless; it has no boundaries:

*¹⁴ When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall down on my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, **how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is.** ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*

Ephesians 3:14-19

- **How wide is God's love?**

Wide enough to reach every person in the whole world.

Luke 15:7,10

- **How long is God's love?**

It spans all the ages past and all the ages to come; it's eternal.

Jeremiah 31:3

- **How high is God's love?**

Nothing can ever separate us from His love.

Romans 8:38-39

- **How deep is God's love?**

It reaches every area of our lives.

How should God's love affect us?

1. We can live with **ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY** that God will take care of us.

Romans 8:32

2. We can live with the **AWARENESS** that our lives are very valuable and important to God.

Ephesians 1:3-6

3. We can live with **FREEDOM** from guilt and condemnation.

Hebrews 4:15

4. We can live with the **ASSURANCE** that God deeply loves our unsaved loved ones and never stops pursuing them.

Matthew 18:11-14

5. We can live with the **CONFIDENCE** that our future is secure in His hands.

Philippians 3:20-21

Discussion Questions:

1. God loves us sacrificially and unconditionally. Describe a time in your life when you've seen God's love demonstrated in these two ways.
2. Sometimes we forget how great God's love is for us. What might be preventing you from experiencing God's boundless love? What Scripture passage can you think of that affirms God's unfailing love for you?
3. Take some time to read Ephesians 3:14-19. What is God showing you through this passage? Write down your thoughts.
4. How has God's love affected the way you think about Him, yourself, and your future?

Introduction: “God drew me close to Him with His unfailing love.”

Learning how to experience God’s love by “opening the window of our soul”

Closed window...

Sin in my life and disobedience to God’s Word keeps me from experiencing God’s love.

⁹“I have loved you even as the Father has loved Me. Remain in My love. ¹⁰ When you obey My commandments, you remain in My love, just as I obey My Father’s commandments and remain in His love.

John 15:9-10

But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love Me and obey My commands.

Deuteronomy 5:10

Open window...

I will live **RIGHTEOUSLY** because God’s love is perfected in lives that are pure.

⁴ The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His Word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.

1 John 2:4-5

Steps to take:

1. Make confession a part of your daily life; keep short accounts. Psalm 51:1-2
2. Spend time in God’s Word on a regular basis (5-7 days per week). Psalm 119:11

Questions to ask:

1. Is there any area of my life that needs to be cleaned up? Any sin in my life that I have not confessed to God that is separating me from Him?
2. Do I spend regular time reading and meditating on God’s Word so that I can know Him and have an intimate relationship with Him?

Closed window...

A believer's learned way of thinking about themselves (self-talk) can keep them from experiencing God's love.

For as he thinks within himself, so he is.

Proverbs 23:7a

Open window...

I will fill my mind with God's **TRUTH** to overcome the negative belief I have learned. I will cling to His **PROMISES** for my life.

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Philippians 4:8

⁷⁶ *May Your unfailing love be my comfort, according to Your promise to Your servant.*

⁷⁷ *Let Your compassion come to me that I may live, for Your law is my delight.*

Psalms 119:76-77

Steps to take:

1. Evaluate your own thinking patterns against Philippians 4:8. Does your self-talk align with God's truth about you?
2. Begin the process of replacing those lies with God's truth (fix your mind on what is true and honorable and right).

Questions to ask:

1. Do I believe that God loves me unconditionally and always desires what is best for my life?
2. Does my identity come from my past and what others say about me? Or is it rooted in Christ?

Closed window...

A believer who is building the foundation of their life on worldly, temporal things instead of on God's foundation and eternal things will have a hard time experiencing God's love.

¹⁵ Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷ And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

1 John 2:15-17

Open window...

I will **SURRENDER** my life (all that I am and all that I have) to my Father in Heaven (the only One who is able and willing to give me all things to enjoy).

...For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.

Romans 5:5

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him.

Romans 12:1

Steps to take:

1. Build the foundation of your life on God's Word. Isaiah 40:8
2. Seek His will in everything you do. Romans 12:1-2
3. Choose by faith to surrender (sign over) every part of your life to God each day. Galatians 2:20

Question to ask:

Can I, today, quit trying to run my life my own way and surrender everything to God, the true lover of my soul, and allow His Spirit to have freedom to work in every area of my life?

Closed window...

A believer who listens to Satan's lies and accusations about God's Word and God's character will miss the signs of God's love.

¹The serpent was the craftiest of all the creatures the Lord God had made. So the serpent came to the woman. "Really?" he asked. "None of the fruit in the garden? God says you mustn't eat any of it?" ²⁻³"Of course we may eat it," the woman told him. "It's only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not to eat. God says we mustn't eat it or even touch it, or we will die." ⁴"That's a lie!" the serpent hissed. "You'll not die! ⁵God knows very well that the instant you eat it you will become like Him, for your eyes will be opened—you will be able to distinguish good from evil!" ⁶The woman was convinced. How lovely and fresh looking it was! And it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit and gave some to her husband, and he ate it too. ⁷And as they ate it, suddenly they became aware of their nakedness, and were embarrassed. So they strung fig leaves together to cover themselves around the hips.

Genesis 3:1-7

Open window...

I will **PRAY** specifically against the accusations of Satan and refuse to believe his lies. I will ask God to increase my knowledge and awareness of His love for me.

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Steps to take:

1. Stand firm against Satan's lies!

Matthew 4

2. For every doubt, pray a prayer!

Ephesians 3:14-19

Question to ask:

Do I constantly listen to Satan's lies that cause me to doubt God's goodness in my life, His love for me, and the truth of His Word?

Discussion Questions:

1. What aspects of this message were most helpful to you? Why?
2. Which of the four “windows of your soul” have you felt closed you off from experiencing God’s love?
3. Share what you think it will look like to open that window in your life. What steps will you need to take this week?
4. Who might help you on your journey of opening the “window of your soul” to experience God’s love? Why is it so important to enlist the help of trusted friends and mentors as we seek to know and experience God’s love?
5. Who might God want you to help as they seek to open a “window of their soul”?

Introduction: People need a love they can touch and see

We reflect the heart of God as we love one another:

- We are **COMMANDED** to love one another.

⁷ Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before. ⁸ Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true Light is already shining.

1 John 2:7-8

- Our love for one another is **PROOF** that we belong to Christ.

⁹ If anyone claims, “I am living in the Light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the Light and does not cause others to stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

1 John 2:9-11

So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

1 John 3:10

If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead.

1 John 3:14

- God's love is **POURED OUT** in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹ God showed how much He loved us by sending His one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is brought to full expression in us.

¹³ And God has given us His Spirit as proof that we live in Him and He in us.

1 John 4:7-13

- We are to love others as **CHRIST** loved us.

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up His life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:16

- Love for others is expressed by **ACTIONS**, not by mere words.

¹⁷ If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

1 John 3:17-18

- Love for others is a **CHOICE** we make, not always a feeling.

And this is His commandment: We must believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

1 John 3:23

A personal evaluation from 1 Corinthians 13:

_____ Love acts patiently.

A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

Proverbs 15:18

_____ Love acts kindly.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

_____ Love does not act jealously.

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

Proverbs 14:30

_____ Love does not act boastful or proud.

⁵ Your attitude should be the kind that was shown us by Jesus Christ, ⁶ who, though He was God, did not demand and cling to His rights as God, ⁷ but laid aside His mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. ⁸ And He humbled Himself even further, going so far as actually to die a criminal's death on a cross.

Philippians 2:5-8

_____ Love does not act rudely.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

_____ Love does not demand its own way.

³ Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. ⁴ Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and in what they are doing.

Philippians 2:3-4

_____ Love is not easily angered.

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

James 1:19

_____ Love keeps no record of when it has been wronged.

*"I, even I, am the One who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake,
And I will not remember your sins.*

Isaiah 43:25

_____ Love is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever
the truth wins out.

*Therefore I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything, I hate every false
way.*

Psalms 119:128

_____ Love never gives up.

*And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the
weak, be patient with all men.*

1 Thessalonians 5:14

_____ Love never loses faith.

*¹ "Do not judge lest you be judged. ² "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and
by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³ "And why do you look at the
speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*

Matthew 7:1-3

_____ Love is always hopeful.

*³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies
and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to
comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are
comforted by God.*

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

_____ Love endures through every circumstance.

*For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you
may receive what was promised.*

Hebrews 10:36

Discussion Questions:

1. Briefly share a specific time in your life when you've seen God love you in a powerful way through a fellow believer.
2. From what you learned in 1 John, why is loving one another such a high priority? List three reasons why we are to love one another from the heart.
3. The book of 1 John not only tells us "why" loving one another is so important, but it also instructs us on "how" we are to love one another. Of the following three ways we are commanded to love each other, which do you find most challenging?
 - Love others as Christ loves us (sacrificially and practically).
 - Love in actions not merely words.
 - Love as a choice we make, not always a feeling.
4. Share two aspects of the "1 Corinthians evaluation" that reveal the Holy Spirit has poured out His love to others through you.
5. Share one area of your life that God revealed to you that needs His grace and help for you to become a more effective vessel of His love. What would it look like to cooperate with the Spirit's work in making you more loving in this area? What practical steps will you take to obey God in this area?

God is preparing a home for me

¹ “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in Me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with Me where I am.

John 14:1-3

What is my home like?

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

Revelation 21:1-2

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among His people! He will live with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them.

Revelation 21:3

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

Revelation 21:4

⁵ And the One sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then He said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And He also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. ⁷ All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be My children. ⁸ “But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Revelation 21:5-8

⁹ Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰ So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal. ¹² The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. ¹³ There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. ¹⁷ Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel). ¹⁸ The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. ¹⁹ The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprased, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass.

Revelation 21:9-21

²² I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. ²⁴ The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. ²⁵ Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. ²⁶ And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. ²⁷ Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

Revelation 21:22-27

¹ Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

Revelation 22:1-2

³ No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and His servants will worship Him. ⁴ And they will see His face, and His name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

Revelation 22:3-5

How can I live with the awareness each day that I am “Heaven bound”?

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

1 John 5:4

- Faith is being sure and certain about unseen hopes and realities.
- Faith views things through spiritual eyes and perceives things invisible to the natural eye; believing when you can't see the answer.
- Faith is not based on feelings; faith trusts God in spite of how you feel.
- Faith is not an evidence of outward circumstances. The outward circumstances may look impossible, but faith trusts in God in spite of how things look.
- Faith is not something that acts automatically; it's not something that acts magically—not like a thermostat that automatically turns on and off.
- Faith is an activity; it has to be exercised. It does not come into operation by itself; you have to put it into operation. You put it into operation as you walk in obedience to God no matter what the circumstances look like.

By faith, we take hold of the promise of our eternal home that our Heavenly Father is preparing for us at this very moment.

Discussion Questions:

1. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being every day or even multiple times a day, and 1 being almost never), how often do you think about Heaven?
2. What did you learn about Heaven that was new to you?
3. When Jesus sought to prepare His followers for His departure and the adversity He knew they would face, He taught them about Heaven (John 14). Why do you think it is important for us in our day to have a clear understanding of Heaven?
4. Someone has said, "Hope is God's oxygen for the soul; you can't live without it for even a few minutes." How does Heaven provide an unshakable hope for us as believers even when circumstances are difficult or seemingly impossible?
5. What specific steps could you take to begin living your life with the constant awareness that Heaven is your home? How would it impact your life and relationships if you really believed a "great big eternal hug" awaits you in Heaven?