



“No, the true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship...Our place is on our faces before him in adoration.” John Stott

THE BEING of GOD: LOVE

1 JOHN 4:7-16 NKJV

Knowing God Through Love

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Seeing God Through Love

¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

1 JOHN 4:7-16 CEB

Love and God

⁷ Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. ⁸ The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us. ¹³ This is how we know we remain in him and he remains in us, because he has given us a measure of his Spirit. ¹⁴ We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world. ¹⁵ If any of us confess that Jesus is God's Son, God remains in us and we remain in God. ¹⁶ We have known and have believed the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who remain in love remain in God and God remains in them.



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1 JOHN 4:7-16 NIV

God’s Love and Ours

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another,^(A) for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God^(B) and knows God.^(C) ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.^(D) ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son^(E) into the world that we might live through him.^(F) ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us^(G) and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.^(H) ¹¹ Dear friends,^(I) since God so loved us,^(J) we also ought to love one another.^(K) ¹² No one has ever seen God;^(L) but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.^(M)

¹³ This is how we know^(N) that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.^(O) ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify^(P) that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.^(Q) ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God,^(R) God lives in them and they in God.^(S) ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love.^(T) Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.^(U)

Cross references

A. 1 John 4:7 : S 1Jn 3:11

1Jn 3:11¹¹ For this is the message you heard^(A) from the beginning:^(B) We should love one another.^(C)

B. 1 John 4:7 : S Jn 1:13

Jn 1:13¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.^(A)

C. 1 John 4:7 : S 1Jn 2:4

1Jn 2:4⁴ Whoever says, “I know him,”^(A) but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.^(B)

D. 1 John 4:8 : ver 7, 16

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another,^(A) for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God^(B) and knows God.^(C) ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love.^(A) Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.^(B)



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E. 1 John 4:9 : Jn 1:18

Jn 1:18 ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God,^(A) but the one and only Son, who is himself God and^(B) is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

F. 1 John 4:9 : Jn 3:16, 17; 1Jn 5:11

Jn 3:16-17 ¹⁶ For God so loved^(A) the world that he gave^(B) his one and only Son,^(C) that whoever believes^(D) in him shall not perish but have eternal life.^(E) ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world^(A) to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.^(B)

1 Jn 5:11 ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life,^(A) and this life is in his Son.^(B)

G. 1 John 4:10 : Ro 5:8, 10

Romans 5:8-10 ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.^(A) ⁹ Since we have now been justified^(B) by his blood,^(C) how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath^(D) through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God’s enemies,^(E) we were reconciled^(E) to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!^(G)

H. 1 John 4:10 : S Ro 3:25

Romans 3:25²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,^(A) through the shedding of his blood^(B)—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished^(C)—

I. 1 John 4:11 : S 1Co 10:14

1 Cor 10:14¹⁴ Therefore, my dear friends,^(A) flee from idolatry.^(B)

J. 1 John 4:11 : S Jn 3:16

Jn 3:16 ¹⁶ For God so loved^(A) the world that he gave^(B) his one and only Son,^(C) that whoever believes^(D) in him shall not perish but have eternal life.^(E)

K. 1 John 4:11 : Jn 15:12; S 1Jn 3:11

JN 15:12 ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.^(A)

1Jn 3:11 ¹¹ For this is the message you heard^(A) from the beginning:^(B) We should love one another.^(C)



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L. 1 John 4:12 : S Jn 1:18

JN 1:18 ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God,^(A) but the one and only Son, who is himself God and^{[a](B)} is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.[make God Known]

M. 1 John 4:12 : ver 17; 1Jn 2:5

1 JN 4:17 ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete^(A) among us so that we will have confidence^(B) on the day of judgment:^(C) In this world we are like Jesus.

1JN 2:5 ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word,^(A) love for God^[a] is truly made complete in them.^(B) This is how we know^(C) we are in him:

N. 1 John 4:13 : S 1Jn 2:3

1JN 2:3

³ We know^(A) that we have come to know him^(B) if we keep his commands.^(C)

O. 1 John 4:13 : 1Jn 3:24

1JN 3:24 ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands^(A) lives in him,^(B) and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.^(C)

P. 1 John 4:14 : S Jn 15:27

JN 15:27 ²⁷ And you also must testify,^(A) for you have been with me from the beginning.^(B)

Q. 1 John 4:14 : S Lk 2:11; S Jn 3:17

LK 2:11 ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior^(A) has been born to you; he is the Messiah,^(B) the Lord.^(C)

JN 3:17 ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world^(A) to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.^(B) JESUS

R. 1 John 4:15 : S 1Jn 2:23; 5:5

1JN 2:23 ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.^(A)

1JN 5:5 ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.^(A)

S. 1 John 4:15 : 1Jn 3:24

1JN 3:24 ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands^(A) lives in him,^(B) and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.^(C)



GOD IS...THE BEING OF GOD
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T. 1 John 4:16 : ver 8

1JN 4:8 ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.^(A)

U. 1 John 4:16 : ver 12, 13; 1Jn 3:24

1JN 4:12-13 ¹² No one has ever seen God,^(A) but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.^(B) ¹³ This is how we know^(A) that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.^(B)

1JN 3:24 ²⁴ The one who keeps God’s commands^(A) lives in him,^(B) and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.^(C)

HOW DOES GOD DEFINE LOVE?

Other verses:
Galatians 5:14
Leviticus 19:18
Matthew 5:43-45
Galatians 6:2
John 17:24



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GOD IS LOVE

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1 John 4:8

Doctrine

God is love. The Bible plainly declares that to us—not just in the explicit words of 1 John 4:8 (“God is love”) but also in literally thousands of ways throughout God’s Word. As J. I. Packer says, “To know God’s love is indeed heaven on earth.”

If there were no world and no universe, the persons of the Trinity would still have an infinite, blessed, unchangeable, eternal, powerful love between them—an inward love. This love satisfies them because it is a perfect love; it cannot be increased or decreased in any way. Yet according to the free decision of God to extend his love outward, others may be objects of it as well.

God loves Jesus, all creatures, human beings, the elect, and the goodness in the elect. His love is best described as an *affection*, a love that arises inwardly and extends outward. His love is not a *passion*, as if something causes God to love. His love to others is caused by himself. If someone is pleasing to God, it is because God has made that person pleasing to himself according to his love and grace.

God exists as an inexhaustible fountain of love. His goal for his creatures is that they love God and one another, for we are never more like him than when we love. Heaven itself will forever be a place of love (**1 Cor. 13:13**).

There are different ways of understanding God’s love. While his intra-Trinitarian love is eternal and therefore natural and necessary, God loves his creatures voluntarily, not necessarily. According to this outward, voluntary impulse, we can identify a threefold distinction in God’s love:

1. God’s universal love toward all things: “The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made” (**Ps. 145:9**). Even the creatures of the earth are beneficiaries of God’s love.
2. God’s love toward all human beings, both elect and reprobate: “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (**Matt. 5:44–45**). God still loves a person who hates and rejects him, even granting him the ability to manifest such hate in thoughts, words, and actions.
3. God’s special love toward his people: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (**1 Pet. 2:9**). This theme dominates the pages of Scripture, compared with the other types of love that God shows toward his creation and unbelievers.



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Thus in the Old Testament, God declares through the prophet Isaiah,

“For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,”
says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (**Isa. 54:10**)

Likewise, the New Testament proclaims, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (**Rom. 8:38–39**).

The third category of love—God’s love toward his people—has as its special focus the love that God shows to us in and through Christ Jesus. Here we may speak of a further threefold type of love:

1. God’s love of benevolence, understood in terms of his election and predestination: “... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (**Eph. 1:4–6**).
2. God’s love of beneficence, whereby he wills to redeem his people: “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (**Rom. 8:32**).
3. God’s love of delight or friendship, whereby he rewards his people according to their holiness: “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (**John 14:21**; see also v. 23).

God is good in himself and so delights in himself. For example, he delights in his infinite, eternal, unchangeable, powerful, abundant, and majestic goodness. This delight in his essence provides the basis for his enjoyment of his creatures. If God loves himself, he must love the image of his own goodness when it is in others. In loving others, God loves himself and his own virtues. God loves all things according to the degree of loveliness in it, which loveliness comes from him, according to the wisdom of his purposes and grace.

God’s Love for Christ

We can understand God’s outward love toward others by focusing on his love for his Son. So, for example, the Son of God exists as the special object of the Father’s delight and love. Christ’s beauty cannot be compared to any created person. While truly referring to Israel’s king, Psalm 45 is ultimately fulfilled in Christ: “You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever” (v. 2).



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Even before the incarnation, the Father speaks of the prospect of his servant, the Messiah: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights” (**Isa. 42:1**). The Father’s delight is renewed after the incarnation at Christ’s baptism (**Matt. 3:17**) and transfiguration (**Matt. 17:5**).

At Christ’s baptism, the Father speaks to Christ of his love for him: first, for Christ (to personally assure him), and second, for us (that we may know how much the Father loves the Son).

As Christ testifies, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand” (**John 3:35**; see also **John 5:20**). Not only the Father but also Jesus himself desires and prays that believers may know of the love the Father has for the Son (**John 17:23, 26**). God reveals this intra-Trinitarian love so we might realize that in loving the Son, the Father also loves us. To highlight this love of God for his people, Calvin quotes Augustine as follows:

God’s love ... is incomprehensible and unchangeable. For it was not after we were reconciled to him through the blood of his Son that he began to love us. Rather, he has loved us before the world was created, that we also might be his sons along with his only-begotten Son—before we became anything at all. The fact that we were reconciled through Christ’s death must not be understood as if his Son reconciled us to him that he might now begin to love those whom he had hated. Rather, we have already been reconciled to him who loves us, with whom we were enemies on account of sin. The apostle will testify whether I am speaking the truth: “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” [Rom. 5:8]. Therefore, he loved us even when we practiced enmity toward him and committed wickedness. Thus in a marvelous and divine way he loved us even when he hated us. For he hated us for what we were that he had not made; yet because our wickedness had not entirely consumed his handiwork, he knew how, at the same time, to hate in each one of us what we had made, and to love what he had made.

The gift of his Son remains the greatest gift God can give (Rom. 8:32). In one sense, the only truth we need to believe concerning his love is that he gave his Son for us. Nothing is more glorious or shows his love better. Nothing causes us to raise our thoughts and hearts so high as recognizing that God sent his Son to die a cursed death so that we might know the love of God.

According to William Bates, “A greater love was expressed to wretched man, than to Christ himself.” How so? “God in giving him to die for us, declared that our salvation was more dear to him than the life of his only Son.”⁴ In other words, God would never have put his Son through such torment and suffering unless he wished to display the greatness of his love toward his people. Every humiliation, trial, heartache, and suffering that our Savior experienced was God showing his love toward us.

Not only God’s love but also the Savior’s love comes to its highest expression in Christ’s death for us. His love was

so pure and great, there can be no resemblance, much less any parallel of it; for he was perfectly holy, and so the privilege of immortality was due to him; and his life was infinitely more precious than the lives of angels and men; yet he laid it down, and submitted to a cursed death, and to that which was infinitely more bitter, the wrath of God: and all this for sinful men, who were under the just and heavy displeasure of the Almighty.



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Application

God’s love for us in Christ has many practical applications for the Christian life. We know that the “love of Christ controls us” (**2 Cor. 5:14**) because he died for us. Do we love God with the type of love that we ought to? In preaching a sermon on **Exodus 3:14**, titled “I Am That I Am,” the Church of Scotland minister John Love complained,

But, from experience, it is plain, how cold, how dead, how perverse, the hearts of men are, as to the great truths concerning the being and perfections of God. And it is only because these fundamental truths are basely and carelessly passed over by many preachers, that the hearts of many professors of religion do not fret, and boil, and foam with indignation, in the hearing of the word of God. I am persuaded that if the glory of the true God were faithfully, and in its proper majesty, published as it hath sometimes been, unless God should sovereignly change the hearts of many, it would soon thin many places of worship. Were God to appear in the sanctuary, as he hath sometimes done, the whole herd of hollow-hearted, worldly, conceited professors, would flee from him, as wild beasts keep at a distance from a fire blazing in the desert.

We must meditate carefully on this attribute of God because our own attitude toward others will change when we come to grasp God’s love for us. In other words, if God and Christ can set their hearts on hell-deserving sinners, who by nature hate God, then how can we have a different attitude than God toward the same people? We love unbelievers with a love that seeks to win them, not only by words but also by deeds, to the love of God in Christ.

We love believers because, after we have loved God, such love is natural to us who share the same Spirit. How can we not love those whom God and Christ love? You cannot love Christ and hate his bride. You must love what he loves. You must love believers, even those who can be very unlovable. God’s love led to action. God’s love led to sacrifice. Our love must be no different.

Speaking to his disciples, Christ highlights the importance of a loving attitude toward one another: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (**John 13:34–35**).

Why is this old commandment called “new”? Surely this injunction is a paraphrase of several Old Testament laws, is it not? Christ’s words to his disciples in **John 13:34–35** remind us of the commands in Deuteronomy **15:12–18** and **Leviticus 19:33–34** (“you shall love him as yourself”).

The command in the Old Testament to love “as I have loved you” refers specifically to the exodus of God’s people out of Egypt. God’s gracious dealings with his “treasured possession” (the indicative) provide the reason why they in turn should show the same type of graciousness (the imperative).

In comparison, Christ’s words “as I have loved you” (**John 13:34**) are directly connected to his act of humiliation in **John 13** (foot washing) and his sacrificial death on the cross (**Phil. 2:5–11**). Christ’s humiliation and sacrifice point to a new way in which believers are to love one another. If our love never reaches to the place of sacrifice, then we have not loved as God desires us to love. His love involves sacrifice. Husbands, therefore, show their love for their wives in sacrificial love (**Eph. 5:25**).



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Galatians 5:14 speaks of fulfilling “the whole law” when you love your neighbor as yourself. But while Paul applies the law generally in **Galatians 5:14**, he is also not afraid to apply the law specifically, in its Decalogue form, in other passages, such as **Romans 13:8–10** and **Ephesians 6:2–3**.

If you have trouble loving others, think of the burden that God bore to show his love for you. If that cannot cure us of our self-love and dislike of others, especially regarding our brothers and sisters in Christ, I’m afraid nothing else will adequately remedy our problem. Also, remember that God commands us to love because, when we are like him, we find joy in loving, even when it is painful. Keep in mind that God’s love is a blessed love that brings him satisfaction. Christ’s love for us was a painful love that brought him satisfaction. And our love for God, which is shown in our love for others, will bring us both satisfaction and blessedness.

Jones, M. (2017). [*God is: a devotional guide to the attributes of god*](#) (pp. 63–215). Crossway.