

The God Who Is

Leader's Guide

God Is Love

1 John 4:7-21

Background

I John is a letter written by the Apostle John, who was a fisherman before he became one of Jesus' 12 disciples. He was actually Jesus' closest friend when He lived on earth, and is sometimes referred to in the Bible as "the disciple whom Jesus loved". We don't know exactly to whom John was writing this letter to, or much about them, except that they were Christians. It is also difficult to know exactly when John wrote the letter—although most scholars agree it was written in the second half of the first century AD. However, the truths of the letter are timeless, and applicable to all believers of all times. John also wrote the Gospel of John, 2 John, 3 John, and the Book of Revelation.

Why do you think the topic of love dominates music, movies, books and magazines, and so many other aspects of our lives?

Love is a basic need all humans have—God created us that way!

Blaise Pascal, the famous French mathematician and philosopher, once said, "There is a God-shaped vacuum inside the heart of every man, that can only be filled by the person of Jesus Christ". What are some of the things we try to use to fill the "God-shaped" hole in our lives?

Read I John 4:7-21

In v.14, John writes that, "The Father has sent His Son to be the savior of the world". What is it that we need to be saved from?

Technically, the answer is that we need to be saved from God's wrath, which He rightfully should pour out on us because of our sin. But many people might answer "from our sins" or "from ourselves", which is on the right train of thought.

WORD STUDY: Love (or "**agape**" in the original Greek language):

This word appears 29 times in the above passage (words like "dear children" are actually "loved ones"). Agape "*expresses the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects...It is an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself*". It is the key, defining word used to characterize God both in the Old and New Testament. It is contrasted with other Greek words for love, such as "phileo" (tender affection/brotherly love) and "eros" (sexual love). In summary, it is a complete, unconditional, pure, sacrificial love. (From Vine's Expository Dictionary)

What do vv.9-10 say is the way God "showed" or "proved" His love for us?

By sending His Son to die on the cross to save us (from God's wrath), and so that we might live

What does "atoning sacrifice" (or "propitiation") mean (v.10)?

The answer is "satisfaction".

***Ask them "What needs to be satisfied?" Answer: the sentence of punishment (God's wrath) for our sins*

© 2001

Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc.
Permission granted to copy for
personal or ministry uses, pro-
vided this credit line is included
and content remains unchanged.

The God Who Is

Leader's Guide

God Is Love – page 2

1 John 4:7-21

Why does God love us?

Because that is who He is. He IS love—He would have to go against His very nature to NOT love us. The fact that He loves us has NOTHING to do with anything we have been or done, and EVERYTHING to do with who God is

Is there anything you can do to make God love you less than He does now? Is there anything you can do to make God love you more than He does now? How does that make you feel?

NO!! Again, God's love is totally dependent on His character, not on our actions

When is it hardest to believe that God loves you?

Possible responses might include 1) "When I fail or sin", or 2) "When I am going through a hard time"

We use the phrase, "Like father, like son" to describe the fact that children often resemble their parents. How does this principle relate to those who claim to be God's children (vv.7-8,11-12, 20-21)?

If God lives in us, He should be able to express His love through us to others. We should be loving in an agape way.

How does our love for each other make the invisible God visible?

God can, in a way, be "seen" through our tangible, loving actions toward others

If someone isn't loving, does that mean they're not a Christian?

No, not necessarily. What v.8 says is that if someone doesn't love, they don't know God—the solution is for that person to get to know God better—to have a greater revelation of God's love for them

In what ways, large or small, can we sacrificially love each other?

Questions for personal reflection

1. Pray the prayer from Ephesians 3:16-19 for your prayer partner for this week.
2. Is there someone whom you have a hard time loving? Pray and ask God to reveal His love more fully for you—and then see if this changes your feelings for the other person. Acknowledge to God that you don't have the ability, in your own power, to love them, and ask God to love them "through" you.
3. Go back, look at the passage again, and reflect on all the different aspects of God we looked. What part of God's character means the most to you? Meditate on that, and maybe even memorize one of the verses that talk about it.

"There is a God we want, and there is a God who is—and they are not the same God.

The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is."

Passages For Further Study:

Psalm 136
John 15:9-13
Romans 5:5-8;
8:31-39
I Corinthians 13
Ephesians 2:1-5