

I. Introduction:

Who is someone you love? How did your love for that person come about? Did you have to work on your love for that person? Did it come about naturally?

II. Study: 1 John 4:1-21

⁴ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have 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. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is 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 his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

III. Into The Bible:

1. What does it mean not to believe in every spirit? What are these spirits? How would a person actually "test the spirits"?
2. Who is the "they" and the "we" in verses 5 & 6?
3. What does it mean for God's love to be perfected (12)? How is God's love imperfect? How does it become more perfect?
4. The main claim of this section is that because God loves us, love should flow out to brothers and sisters (7, 11, 19-20). Is that true? Is it necessarily true that if you receive love, you'll want and be able to love others?
5. Is fear contradictory to love? Does this mean that we should never be afraid of anything?

IV. Application:

Truly abiding in God's love and receiving his love is about the recognition of our sin. If we think we deserve his love or we don't recognize the depth of our sin, we will not really see God's love for us. We won't recognize how deeply he loves us. We won't change. We won't stop sinning and we won't have any love for others. The recognition of God's love should break us. It should cut us to our core. And when it does that, his love is made complete in us. That is when we begin to manifest God's love in our lives. It cannot come without a deep and true abiding in God, the gospel and in his love.

6. Throughout the book of 1 John, the author has been connecting the truth of the gospel with love. Today however, we often find that speaking truth into other people's lives often conflicts with love. Does 1 John help you to resolve that contradiction? How?
7. Has the gospel and a deep realization of God's love changed you? How?