

God Is Love
1 John 4:16-21

Introduction

- 1) How do you show people you love that you love them? Is it by what you say or what you do, both or neither? Is love really “in his kiss?!” Gary Chapman, in his wonderful book *The Five Languages of Love* says how you show love depends in part on how others hear it, see it and feel it. Unfortunately there is often a breakdown in communication. Danny Havard (MarriedLife Pastor at 2nd Baptist Church in Houston, Texas) and his wife Melinda (Licensed Professional Counselor) describe love languages like this: *Have you even been in a foreign country and experienced the frustration of not speaking the language of that culture? Sometimes our spouses and children can seem like a foreign culture. To effectively communicate with anyone, you must know what language he or she understands. With our loved ones, we need to learn to understand their love language. Some will understand your message through a word of encouragement, others through an act of service, and still others through a thoughtful gift.* Three simple questions will help you discover your own primary love language: (1) What do I complain about the most? (2) What do I request most often? (3) How do I normally show my love to others?
- 2) Gary Chapman says we can basically boil the number of “love languages” down to 5.
 1. Quality Time – being there
 2. Acts of Service – doing things for others
 3. Physical Touch – hugs, kisses, hand holding
 4. Encourage Words – reassuring and positive communication
 5. Gifts – thoughtful and creative display of appreciation
- 3) For me it is touch and words. For Charlotte it is service and gifts. [May expound a bit!]
- 4) In 1 John 4:8 & 16 the Bible says “God is Love.” In other words it is God’s essential character and nature to love for this is who He is in His innermost being. But how does He show us He loves us? Take Gary Chapman’s 5 love language categories and you discover He has shown it in ways we can all understand.
 1. Time – Hebrews 13:5 – “I will never leave you or forsake you.” John 14:16-18 – “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”
 2. Service – Jesus feeds the 5,000 (John 6) and washes the disciples’ feet (John 13).
 3. Physical Touch – 1 John 1:1 – “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.”
 4. Encouraging Words – John 14:1-3 – “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.
 5. Gifts – 1 John 4:10 – “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.” John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Transition

Our God is truly a God of love, a God who speaks love and shows love in an unmistakable manner. In this final section of John's discourse on love in 1 John 4:16-21, the apostle of love draws our attention to 3 blessings that flow from the God of love to the children He loves.

I. God's love provides for us communion. 4:16

- John was certain of God's love. It was something he knew (W.A.R.) and believed (W.A.R.). It was a settled reality in his soul.
- We is emphatic. "We ourselves have known and believed." There is not the slightest degree of doubt in his mind or heart. He knows and believes the love God has for us because of (1) Who God is: He is love, and (2) What God did: He sent His Son.

1. We live in God.

He who abides (cont.) in love (*agape*) abides in God.

M.P. – God is love.

m.P. – I abide in love [God's love].

Con. – I abide in God.

2. God lives in us.

- And God [abides] in him. As I abide, remain, live, have my very existence in the realm of God's love I abide in Him, but, He also abides, is in me. This reciprocal and mutual relationship is spiritual and tangible, supernatural and yet visible. As I love others you will see that I am vitally connected and in communion with God and that God is active and alive in me.
- God is love, and if God lives in me then I will love too.

II. God's love makes us confident. 4:17-18

- John shifts gears at this point turning to the ideas of judgment and "fear" (4 x in v. 18). Love has consequences not only for the present, but also for the future. John would want us to understand that (1) loving others (vs. 7, 11, 12), (2) possessing the Spirit (v. 13), (3) confessing the Son (v. 15) and (4) mutually abiding in God and His love brings God's love to its full and perfect purpose in our lives.

1. Be confident about the future. 4:17

- Perfected (W.A.R.) – brought to full expression, maturity, completion. Love has attained its intended goal.
- The result: boldness (confidence) in the day of judgment (perhaps judgment in general or in particular: "The Judgment Seat of Christ").
- Why? Because as He is, so are we in the world. Because we are in Christ, in Him, abide in Him, we stand in relation to God and the world the same way Christ does. The world is our enemy and God is our Father! He is love and so we love in Him and through Him.
- The life of love provides a foundation for Christian hope when our service, not our salvation is evaluated (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; Rom. 14:10). Such confidence is grounded in our likeness to Jesus, a likeness that continually reflects love.

2. **Be confident without fear. 4:18**

- Love (5x) fear (4x) Fear is first in the sentence and emphatic.
- John begins with a word of affirmation and assurance. Lit. “Fear not is in love.” There is no dread in the one who abides in God and His love, no fear of future judgment. In fact “perfect love” casts out, drives away fear, it turns it out-of-doors.
- The torment associated with being unprepared to meet God as judge vanishes because we have God’s perfect love abiding in us. In contrast the one fearing God as judge rather than loving Him as Father (v. 14) goes on fearing and rightly so. He fears now and he will fear in the future. In contrast love brings us rest, peace and confidence.

III. **God’s love gives us a command. 4:19-21**

Love does have obligations. It also has a definite origin as well.

1. **God’s love is prior. 4:19**

- We love ... yes, but He loved first.
- Our love owes its origin to God’s love.
- Our love flows more freely from a heart that says thank you to God for the initiative He took in loving us.

2. **God’s love is our proof. 4:20**

- Verse 20 introduces a hypothetical, “If someone says” (cf. 1:6, 8, 10)
- Character is proven by action.
- An argument from the lesser to the greater.
- The unloved brother has been seen and continues to be in sight, while God has been and continues to be out of sight.
- Love for God and hatred for a brother cannot coexist in the same heart. They are incompatible and cannot live together.
- Loving your brother who you can see is proof that you love God whom you cannot see. To do otherwise is to prove yourself to be a liar.

3. **God’s love is our practice. 4:21**

- Command – not a suggestion or recommendation.
- John is here summarizing words he heard from Jesus in Mark 12:30-31.
- Love God and love one’s brother is really 2 parts of one command. One looks toward heaven and the other looks toward earth.
- Paul says in Galatians 5:14, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Conclusion

David Scholer hits us right between the eyes in his comments on this text.

1 John 4:20-21 may qualify as one of those biblical texts which “Bible believers” often do not really believe! That our ability to love God is actually tied to the reality of our love for one another is an unnerving assertion. Too

many of us express the attitude contained in this “private prayer before public worship,” written to unmask our real feelings and thoughts:

Lord, give us all a nice feeling this morning. May Thy special blessing be with those who will be active in this service while the rest of us sit still and listen. We pray that we may enjoy the preliminaries, and that the sermon may give us all a glow. I know I have offended at least two people this week with my quick temper, but please do not let the thought of that intrude upon this spiritual feast. Praise God. Amen. (R&E, 1990), 311.

The song says it well, “And they’ll know we are Christian by our love, by our love, yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”