

WHAT IS LOVE?

1 John 4:17 - 5:12



SYNOPSIS

Last week, we briefly mentioned the four kinds of love (eros, phileo, storge, and agape) and discussed the supremacy of agape love as the love in which we ought to emulate. This week, we turn to John's observations on maturing in love. That is, learning to increase our love both quantitatively (i.e. loving more) and qualitatively (i.e. loving better).

John spends the rest of chapter 4 talking about love being a process, how love gives us confidence for the future and for the here and now, and how loving others and loving God are inextricably intertwined.

Taking a break from his discourse on love, John spends the first 12 verses of chapter 5 circling back to his emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. As Son of God and the Son of Man, Jesus alone is qualified to grant us eternal life.



OUTLINE

1 LOVE IS A PROCESS

John exhorts us to remain/abide in agape love, so that we can live into everything God designed us to be. He tells us that if we remain in the abiding love of Jesus, the process of maturing in love will be perfected/fulfilled in the day we see Jesus face to face. Growing in love is an active process of remaining in Him. Growing in quantity and quality of our love is much like working out. Consistency, increased "weight," rest all contribute to maturing in love.

2 LOVE GIVES US CONFIDENCE

When we are abiding in the agape love of God (by remaining in Him), we are free from the fear of punishment (eternal separation from the Father). We can have confidence that we will be with the Father, not just for the future, but for the here and now as well.

3 LOVING GOD IS INTERTWINED WITH LOVING OTHERS

Our expression of love for God is supported by our love for others. These two have a symbiotic relationship and the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) should be understood as 1) Love the Lord Your God with all your heart/soul/strength/mind, and 1a) Love your neighbor as yourself. Loving God helps us love others. Loving others is evidence of our love for God.

3 JESUS, FULLY DIVINE, FULLY HUMAN

John once again refutes the false teachings of gnosticism (where Jesus didn't really come in the flesh, but only appeared in the flesh). He points out the humanity of Christ to a people who only believe in the divinity of Christ. We need to hold both truths in tension. The nature of Christ was one of the early doctrinal fights, leading to the Athanasian Creed. Ultimately, we need to hold onto both truths, because His nature as fully God and fully man is what makes Him uniquely qualified to grant us eternal life.



kairos
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? DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

What is the current quality/quantity of your love? What does it look like to "add more weight" (i.e. grow in love)?

2

What qualities of love (from 1 Corinthians 13) do you embody? What qualities do you struggle with?

3

What does it mean to have confidence in God because of His love? What does it look like to live with that confidence?

4

How is loving others the same as loving God? How can loving God be the same as loving others?

5

Does Jesus's humanity or divinity matter more to you in this season of life? Does it matter to you that both are 100% true?



BIG IDEA

Remaining in God's love requires active obedience. You might even say that obedience is God's love language. Remaining in God's agape love also promises victory in this life and the next. Choose to actively remain, and lean on community to keep making that choice.

