

## How's Your Love Life?

1 John 4:7-10

### Introduction

- 1) Love has many faces. People see it in all sorts of shapes and sizes. I think it is interesting to note that sometimes we see it more clearly not through the eyes of adults, but through the eyes of children. A group of professionals posed the following question to a group of 4 to 8-year-olds: "What does love mean?" The answers they got, as one researcher said, "were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined."

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs." Chrissy – age 6.

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired." Terri – age 4.

"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK." Danny – age 7.

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen." Bobby – age 5.

"Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it everyday." Noelle – age 7.

"Love is when mommy gives daddy the best piece of chicken." Elaine – age 5.

"Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day." May Ann – age 4.

"When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you." Karen – age 7.

"You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget." Jessica – age 7.

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love." Rebecca – age 8.

“ “Love” as seen by Frank Pittman and a bunch of kids”  
*Smart Marriages* Mar. 12, 2002

- 2) Well, it is one thing to get a child's perspective on love, but it is even better to get God's. Several times in Scripture God gives us His thoughts on love. We find it in Song of Songs 8:5-14, 1 Cor. 13, and here in 1 John 4:7-21. John has addressed the subject of love already in 2:7-11 as an indication one is walking in the light and in 3:11-24 as evidence one is a child of God.

Yet it is here, in 4:7-21 that he gives us his most full and complete explanation. As he does he puts a question before all of us, “How’s Your Love Life?” The only way to answer that is to measure our love life by the light of God’s Word and His description of what love is. Verses 7-10 give us 3 characteristics of the love we should have. They also show us something about the nature and character of our God.

### I. **Biblical love is specific. 4:7**

- × The word love dominates 4:7-5:3. It will show up 32 times, (43 in the entire letter). In a real sense John is the expert on love. Paul is the apostle of faith. James is the apostle of works. Peter is the apostle of hope, but John is the apostle of love.
- × John begins 4:7 as he began 4:1, “Beloved” (*agapetoi*), “dear friends” (*NIV*). It is both a term of tenderness and transition to a new subject. The subject was false prophets in 4:1-6. The new subject is love in 4:7-21. John’s overall discussion has a double peak or climax in 4:8 & 16 where he twice declares, “God is love.”

#### 1. **It is a personal responsibility.**

Let us love one another.

- × Us is plural. Love is pre. tense. One another is personal and reciprocal. This command occurs 3 times in verses 7-21 (4:7, 11, 12).
- × Us means you. Us means me. I cannot love others for you and you cannot love others for me. It is something we should all be doing, no exceptions, no strings attached, no contractual clauses of escape.

#### 2. **It is a comprehensive responsibility.**

- × This truth is contained in one Greek word, *allelous*, translated into English as “one another.” John specifically has in mind the way Christians should behave toward other Christians. We all should love all of them all of the time, in every conceivable direction.

Not all of us should love some of them all of the time.

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Not some of us should love all of them all of the time.

No! All of us should love all of them all of the time.

### II. **Biblical love is supernatural. 4:7-8**

- × John knew that we cannot love all of the people all of the time in our own strength and ability. It’s not our nature. It’s just not in us. But remember 1 John 4:4. The greater one in us who keeps us safe from Antichrist and false teachers is the same one in us who enables us to love another.
- × Loving others God’s way is a witness and provides evidence of 2 very wonderful truths.

**1. It shows you are born of God. 4:7**

- × Love is of God – Love has its source in God and flows like a river from Him. It is as natural as water flowing from a spring. Love out of God is (lit.).
- × Everyone who loves is born (W.A.R.) of God. Everyone who loves others with the divine type of love, gives proof of their new birth. This kind of love, which has its source in God, can only come from God or one who has God's nature, and you only receive God's nature when you are born again, born from above, born of God. The divine birth precedes our ability to love in a God-like way. Love does not impart divine love. Love indicates divine life has been imparted.

**2. It shows you know God. 4:7-8**

- × Born in perf. tense (W.A.R.) know is pre. tense (cont. action). Having been born again once, I keep on knowing God, growing in my knowledge and understanding of Him, esp. the truth, that "He is love."
- × Verse 7 is the positive affirmation. Verse 8 is the negative alternative. No love = no knowledge of God = no birth from God. The logic is clear.
- × Why? The answer is given. God is love. What does this simple statement teach us? Much in many ways.
  - 1) God is an active, living, personal being.
  - 2) It is God's nature to love (to give and sacrifice).
  - 3) God is love complements other beautiful statements about God's nature.
    - God is Spirit (John 4:24).
    - God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29).
    - God is light (1 John 1:5).
    - God is true (1 John 5:20).
  - 4) God is love does not equal love is God (a form of pantheistic thinking).
  - 5) "Because God is love, He works against whatever works against love" (Hiebert, *BibSac*, 1990, p. 72).
- × Love does not define God, but God does define love.
  - (1) God is love.
  - (2) Those who have been born of God and know God are God's children.
  - (3) God's children have God's nature.
  - (4) God's children therefore will love.

**III. Biblical love is seen. 4:9-10**

- × It is tragically true that Christians do not always love as they ought. As a parody of "Onward Christian Soldiers," Robert McAfee Brown's "Backward, Christian Soldiers" has these somewhat humorous, yet too tragically true lines:

*Like a fleeing army moves the Church of God; brother treads on brother, grinds him in the sod. We are not united, lots of bodies we: one lacks faith, another hope, and all lack charity. Chorus: Backward, Christian soldiers waging fruitless wars; breaking out in schisms that our God deplures.*

- × I believe we fail to love as we ought when we fail to see what God has done as we should. What exactly has God done? Here are 2 verses by which the heart of God and the gospel are laid bare for all to see.
- 1) **God sent His Son that we might live. 4:9**
- × The words are reminiscent of John 3:16 & 1 John 3:16.
  - × In this looks forward to what follows.
  - × The love of God was manifested – made evident, clear, revealed, shown to be so.
  - × Toward us – sinners, lost, helpless, depraved, unworthy sinners.
  - × God has sent (W.A.R.) His only begotten (“one and only,” *NIV*) Son into the world (the earthly sphere/scene) that we might live (have spiritual life) through Him (and no other).
    - Sent implies preexistence and the fact the Son came on a mission with a purpose as the representative of another. Perfect tense emp. the initial and singular coming with the abiding and continuing effects of that coming.
    - Only begotten (*monogenes*) occurs 9 times in the New Testament and 5 times in John (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Only John uses the term to refer to the Son of God. It speaks of His deity and utter uniqueness. There is truly none like Him. He is one of a kind.
    - Son – the Father’s love, the joy of His heart. The one He loves like no other. **John 3:35**, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.” **John 5:20**, “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.”
    - Live through Him – live now and forever and live through Him and no other. There is no spiritual life for anyone who does not come by Christ and His cross. Such a statement is not popular, and it grows less popular, it seems, almost daily.

“Christian Scholars: Jews Don’t Need Jesus”

G. JEFFREY MACDONALD

c. 2002 *Religion News Service* (week of Sept. 8, 2002)

Rejecting a centuries-old hallmark of Christian teaching on salvation, an ecumenical group of Christian scholars has issued a statement saying Jews can be saved without coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

Claiming “Jews are in an eternal covenant with God,” 21 members of the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations challenged the traditional Christian view of Jesus as savior for all humankind. Because faithful Jews are already in right relationship with God, they said, “we renounce missionary efforts directed at converting Jews. We’re convinced that a rethinking of Christian attitudes toward Jews is central, indispensable and sacred.”

The 10-point statement, made public Sept. 5, 2002 at Boston College and called “A Sacred Obligation,” marks the latest in a series of attempts to bridge historic enmity and divisions between Christians and Jews. It follows also on the heels of an Aug. 12 statement in

which Jews and Catholic bishops said attempts to convert Jews are “no longer theologically acceptable.”

*The Boston Globe* added, “A prominent group of Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars declared that Jews, like Christians, have a covenant with God and that a belief in the divinity of Jesus is not necessary for salvation.” In one of the statement’s most provocative points, the 21 authors said Christians must rethink their understanding of Jesus. “If Jews, who do not share our faith in Christ, are in a saving covenant with God, then Christians need new ways of understanding the universal significance of Christ,” the statement said.

Rabbi Gilbert Rosenthal of the National Council of Synagogues hailed the document, saying, “This needs to be taught in every seminary, to every priest. But it must also trickle down to the grass roots.”

- ★ I strongly suspect I know one seminary where this will not be taught and one church where this teaching will not trickle down. No, we will refuse to commit the greatest act of anti-semitism by telling Jewish friends they do not need Jesus as their Savior. No, God sent His Son that we all, Jew and Gentile, might live. As Paul reminds us in Rom. 5:8, “But God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we [that’s all of us] were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

## 2) **God sacrificed His Son, which proved His love. 4:10**

- × People today reject Jesus as the only Savior. People today find repulsive the idea that God sacrificed His Son.
- × Self-identified post-Christian lesbian theologian Virginia Mollenkott claimed that Jesus’ death was the ultimate in child abuse and a model for human child abuse. “I can no longer worship in a theological context that depicts God as an abusive parent and Jesus as the obedient, trusting child,” she declared.
- × Arunda Gnanadason, director of the sub-unit on Women in the Church and Society of the World Council of Churches, condemned the church as a patriarchal institution that “centered its faith around the cruel and violent death of Christ on the cross, sanctioning violence against the powerless in society.
- × God’s Word sees it all together differently.

In this – looks forward, like v. 9, to what follows.

Is love – love shown, proven, demonstrated.

Not that we loved God, but that He loved us – The initiative was with God not us! He loved us before we loved Him. He loved us when we did not love Him.

God sent His Son to be the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins.

- The purpose in sending the Son is not the incarnation, but the atonement.
- The purpose in sending the Son is not our education but our salvation.
- The purpose in sending the Son was not that He should live, but that He should die. “Amazing Love How Can It Be, That You My King Should Die For Me?”
- Our act was to sin. God’s was to love and send.

Propitiation – (*hilasmon*) – from the *hislaskomai* world group. Used 4 times in the New Testament in the context of Jesus’ death.

**Romans 3:25**, “whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness ...”

**Hebrews 2:17**, “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

**1 John 2:2**, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

**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.”

- × The word means to turn away the wrath of God by means of an offering. In ancient pagan religions human worshippers made the offering to appease an angry deity. The New Testament knows nothing of this. In Christ, God Himself made the satisfaction, the atonement, as He offered Himself in His Son. As 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them...”
- × Propitiation teaches us that God personally hates sin.
- × Propitiation teaches us that sin is serious.
- × Propitiation teaches us the greatness of God’s love in which He provided the offering to turn His wrath away.
- × Propitiation teaches us the truth that Christ’s death satisfied the Father and was a substitution for sinners.
- × Propitiation teaches us that God’s holiness required satisfaction. God’s love provided satisfaction.

### **Conclusion**

- × When we were in darkness God sent His light.  
When we were dead God sent His life.  
When we were in despair God sent His love.  
Where we were in sin God sent His Son.
- × I hope you have not gotten over the fact that God loves you. I hope you never will. How He loves us is the pattern for how we love others. His is a perfect love life. How’s yours?