



6/10/26

Oh my! I had an ah ha moment as I looked at today's passage. I've always struggled with the statement that the world pushes, "You've got to love yourself first before you can love others." But today's passage shows us that the motivation for our love is NOT loving ourselves, but the fact that JESUS loves us. That is so much better!!! Think about it. If someone is really arrogant, they'll use that statement of loving themselves as an excuse to hurt others. If someone is stuck in shame, they will take the call to love themselves as a death sentence. But to know that JESUS loves us... that is both humbling and liberating!!! Here's the wonderful news... Jesus loves you and nothing can take that away. Not even you!!!

*Blessings,
Jonna*

1 John 4:7-14

1 John 4:1-6 spoke of testing the spirits to see if they were really from the Lord. Why put this here... in this context of abiding in the Lord and loving His image bearers, the people of God? I think 1 John 3:24 and 1 John 4:7 give me perspective. 1 John 3:24 reminds me that I have the Holy Spirit abiding in me... so all other "spirits" must align with His character if they are from God. And 1 John 4:7 immediately goes from testing the spirits to loving others as God loves me. This, for me, is when it becomes more real... and when I see how easily I can be deceived.

The spirits (in other passages they're called the elementary spirits of the world) offer me a cheap, counterfeit definition of love. They start with saying, "You can't love others until you love yourself." They pull a bait and switch. They call it "loving yourself," but God calls it "selfish, corrupt desires." My value is not found in me loving myself. My value is found in the fact that I am LOVED by the Creator of this universe who is "high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy" (Isaiah 57:15). He is royal. HE makes me royal. And I will see as I read 1 John 4:7 and beyond... the motivation for my love is NOT that I love myself first, but that JESUS loved me first!!! The FATHER loved me first!!! The SPIRIT loved me first!!! O Lord, let me not be deceived! This drastically impacts how I treat my husband, my children, my friends, my enemies!!!

Vs. 7-8 ~ "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

This is a supernatural, absolutely impossible love to have for ALL people unless I have been born of God. I can have this kind of love for a baby for sure... but for ALL people? Even those who do not love me like this? Can I truly be "EAGER to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" without the Spirit??? Not possible. Can I love all people with a 1 Corinthians type of love? Patient (macro suffering) with all, kind to all, not rude to anyone, not thinking I'm better than anyone, not insisting that my way is the right way with anyone, not being irritable with anyone, not holding grudges against anyone, not enabling anyone to sin in order to avoid conflict, always rejoicing in the truth with everyone, bearing ALL things with all people, believing all things, hoping all good things for everyone, enduring all things with everyone, and NEVER failing in that love? Ummm... no. This is a love that the Lord has to grow in me by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in me. This takes my absolute surrender to Jesus. There is no possible way to love like this without the Lord. This kind of love is FROM God alone, because God IS love. God perfectly loves me with a 1 Corinthians kind of love... without fail. Praise His name!!!

Vs. 9-10 ~ John starts both of these verses with a statement about THIS love...

"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. 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."

God REVEALED His love for us, PROVED His love for us, by sending His only Son into the world to become one with us in flesh, so that we could become one with Him in spirit. We WERE dead in our sins. He made us alive. We live through Jesus. The enormous sacrifice this took... laying down His life, physically pouring out His blood for us (His blood was the only worthy blood to cover our debt), taking the wrath of God that we deserve while the arrogance of the devil celebrated... when Jesus could have called millions of angels to His defense and didn't... all while we watched and cheered, while we were His enemies... Is there ANY reason for me to think I DESERVE this kind of love from Him or think other people OWE me anything? O Lord, please help me to rehearse this truth to my heart, and allow Your Spirit to help me to love like this!

Vs. 11-12 ~ "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us."

In vs. 1, John called us "beloved." In vs. 7 he called us "beloved." And now again in vs. 12 he calls us "beloved." What point is he trying to make??? I think he's trying to say that we're beloved! How beloved? So beloved that Jesus died for us. That's awesome. Love it. End of story. No... BECAUSE God loves me like He does, He wants me to let His love pour through me to others. This is really important for me to see. It doesn't say, "IF PEOPLE love us, we ought to love them." It says, "IF GOD loves us, we ought to love others." His love for us is so big, so

complete, so full, that it's enough love to satisfy us so that we can love others even if or when they don't love us in return. O Lord, do I really believe that??? Please make it so!!! I can see there's more work to be done in me. Here I am, Holy Spirit. Please fill me and change me so that I can love like Jesus.

This is cool. In John 1:18, John said, "No one has ever seen God; God, the only Son, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known." Here in vs. 12, John says again, "No one has ever seen God." But then He doesn't speak to how Jesus made Him known. He speaks to how WE make Him known... in the same way Jesus did... by loving others. The evidence that I dwell with the Lord is that I love others... and as I do, His love is made perfect in me. His LOVE is made perfect in me. His patience, His kindness, His gentleness, all His characteristics of love become mine more and more.

This is important for me to see. God's love is perfected in me WHEN I love others. I don't wait for Him to perfect His love in me and then start loving others. I step out in faith and love... because love comes from faith... and as I do, God's love in me becomes more and more perfect so that I can love more and more perfectly. O Lord, please help me. I want to wait until I just wake up and miraculously love perfectly. But You want me to make the daily choice to love... and as I do, Your Spirit cultivates, waters, fertilizes my love so that it grows and grows. Please help me to do it Your way and not try to define how I think it should be. Your will, Your way, Your work. You're in charge.

Vs. 13-14 ~ "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world."

How good is God? He is so good! He knows that I can't abide in Him without His help, so He gave me His Spirit who helps me. The evidence of God's Spirit dwelling in me and His work being done through me is love. The evidence of the Father truly loving me is that He sent His Son to be my Savior AND He's given me His Spirit to perfect the work in me that Jesus began through His blood shed for me. God calls me to love... because that is the greatest representation of any image bearer of His... to love. I am made in the image of God. The restoration process of sanctification makes me look more and more like Jesus. The way I look more and more like Jesus is to love others as He loves me.

We're in a series about marriage. How does all this apply to my marriage? My job is not to love my husband based on how HE cares for me, but on how JESUS cares for me. I'm called to love Tim motivated by Jesus' love, in the way that Jesus loves. That's easier said than done. Looking at what Jesus did for me is wonderful, and I'm so thankful!!! Loving as Jesus loves me when my husband is not loving me as Jesus loves me (just as I don't always love him as Jesus loves him) can only happen if I'm relying on the Holy Spirit to get my eyes off of myself and even get them off of my husband, but keep my eyes fixed on Jesus. Remember the gospel always. Then I can freely love my husband without conditions or expectations. The way I know I'm truly relying on the Lord and not just trying to avoid conflict is that I'm truly able to respond in love

without resentment. O Lord, please make me more and more like Jesus so that I can love like Him.

I have a quote from a man named Jeremy Taylor that I regularly pray will become true for me. It says, "Lord, do Thou turn me all into love, and all my love into obedience, and let my obedience be without interruption." This is my prayer, Father. You say if I'm abiding in You I can ask whatever I wish, and You will do it for me. This is my prayer... perfect Your love in me. Do the impossible. Amen.