



Preparing for Small Group: Read the passage below, and answer the following questions.

- (1) What do these verses tell me about God?
- (2) What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
- (3) What do these verses tell me about Jesus?
- (4) What does God want me to know?
- (5) What does God want me to do?

“A Loving Family: Part 2”

1 John 4:13-21

Main Idea: Loving God and benefiting from His love demands that you love the children of God.

Facts about God’s love and you:

God loves you (13-16).

- *Through faith in Jesus, He’s given you the Holy Spirit (13-15).*
- *Through faith in Jesus, He’s revealed His personal love for you (16a).*
- *Through faith in Jesus, He’s with you (16b).*

The heart of 1 Jn. 4:13-16 was John’s exclamation that “we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us” (16a). God doesn’t want His love to be a mystery for you to figure out or a possibility for you to hope for in your life. In sending Jesus to be the “Savior of the world,” God proved His love for us in an undeniable and understandable way (14). But how was John — and how are other believers today — so sure that God loves them? It’s not just through a historical event over 2,000 years ago on a cross, John knew — and believers today know — that God loves them through the gift of the Holy Spirit that He gives to them! John knew that God was with him and that he was with God because of the confirmation of that reality in his life through the Spirit of God. Today, nothing has changed! Jesus is the Savior of the world, and all who believe in Him receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who works to affirm and to reaffirm the love of God in the lives of His children. And all of this is possible through faith in Jesus!

1. Read 1 Jn. 4:13. How do you explain the gift of God in giving “us of his Spirit?” How does that happen? How do you know that’s happened in your life?
2. Read 1 Jn. 4:14-15. How do these verses connect to receiving “his Spirit.” What does it mean to confess “that Jesus is the Son of God?” How would you explain to someone how to confess Jesus as the Son of God?
3. Read 1 Jn. 4:16. Have you come to know and to believe the love God has for you? Why? Who can you share this with this week? Find a prayer and accountability partner in your group who will encourage you to share your testimony with someone this week.

God’s love benefits you (17-18).

- *God’s love gives confidence in your forgiveness (17).*
- *God’s love gives freedom from fear (18).*
- *God’s love gives the ability to love (19).*

Again, John used a phrase related to the love of God being perfected or completed with us and in us as believers. God's love is not imperfect, but it is perfectly expressed in the lives of those who benefit from His love. John knew the benefits of God's love in his life, and he also knew that these benefits were huge for every child of God. One of the greatest benefits of God's love is connected to the confidence that His love brings in the forgiveness of sin. There's nothing more terrifying and more smothering than the weight of judgment for sin. The reality of guilt in a person's life and the understanding of God's eternal judgment for sin is overwhelming; however, God's love through Jesus brings confidence in forgiveness that removes the terrifying and smothering weight of judgment for sin. In 1 Jn. 4:18, John pointed to this very fact. Fear comes in connection with punishment, but God's love takes away fear because it removes the punishment that Jesus already received on your behalf on the cross. Finally, John understood that the very fact that He could love God was proof that God loved Him! Today, you can only love God because He first reached out to you with His love. In all of these ways and many more, God's love brings tremendous benefit into the lives of those who believe in Jesus.

1. Read 1 Jn. 4:17. Allow someone to share their testimony of when they received the confidence of forgiveness through God's love in Jesus. Do you know someone who's struggling with guilt from sin? How could you share this passage with them?
2. Read 1 Jn. 4:18. This verse is connected to the previous verse. Guilt brings judgment, and judgment brings fear. Discuss how God uses this to draw people to repentance. Pray for the lost you know. Pray for fear that will lead them to freedom from fear in Christ.
3. Read 1 Jn. 4:19. Who were the people, and what were the circumstances and events that God used to reveal His love for you? Take time to thank God for loving you, and then discuss how God is using you, circumstances, and events to reveal His love for others.

God's love demands your love (20-21).

With the great benefits of God's love comes great expectations for His children. John made the simple point that it's hard to imagine someone truly loving God — whom no-one has seen — when that person doesn't love his/her brother or sister in Christ. In fact, John said that if someone claimed to love God while at the same time hating his/her brother or sister in Christ, then that individual was a liar! These are strong words that lead to a strong command for the children of God who have benefited from the love of God, which is that a believer "must also love his brother" (21). Today, the benefits of God's love haven't changed, and the demands of God's love haven't changed either. If you love God, you must love your brother and sister in Christ. God's love demands your love.

1. Read 1 Jn. 4:20. Are you holding hate towards someone in our faith family, community, or your family? Discretely share your heart with the group, focusing not on what that individual did but on what God is calling you to do. Pray. Forgive. Love.
2. Read 1 Jn. 4:21. In a general sense, what does "commandment" mean? What is the commandment in this verse? How does this commandment apply to your life? Discuss why this commandment is so important to your Father.