

1 John – God is Love: Week Three

What it Means to Love

Day One: How to Identify a Child of God

Psychologists tell us that humans have a core essential need to feel loved and valued. It is probably just as important as our essential need to have food and water to survive. God created us this way – all we need is love!

There are two Greek words in the New Testament that are translated as “love” in the English language:

1. “phileo” – brotherly love (basically, a carnal or worldly form of love)
2. “agape” – unconditional love (a spiritual form of love)

I have heard **phileo love** described as the kind of love that we have for someone until someone better comes along! It is based on our feelings. If you are buying me presents, for example, or complementing me, then I love you! As long as I have a good feeling about you, I will continue to love you. But when I get tired of you, or someone better (in my worldly mindset) comes along, I won't love you anymore. Phileo love is very self-serving. As long as you make me happy, or satisfy me, I will love you.

God loves us with **agape love**, and God is agape love. Agape love is “not a feeling. It's a motivation for action that we are free to choose or reject. Agape is a sacrificial love that voluntarily suffers inconvenience, discomfort, and even death for the benefit of another without expecting anything in return” (www.compellingtruth.org)

In the book of 1 John, when we read the word “love”, it is the word, “agape” from the original Greek text.

Read 1 John 3:1-18

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us...

John begins this section of his letter by telling us to “see” (or pause and meditate on) the amazing agape love that God has for us. He proves this love to us by choosing to call us “children of God”. Then John adds “and that is what we are” – meaning, that it isn't just a name or title He gives us, but we actually are His children. God has adopted us as His children, and we are truly His sons and daughters. Praise His Holy Name!

That we would be called, “children of God”; and such we are!

When you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you were given the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell in you, so that you are now a “*partaker of the divine nature*”.

(2 Peter 1:4)

In Galatians, Paul tells us that the children of Abraham are justified (made righteous) by faith. “*Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.*” (Galatians 3:6-7)

“**For you are all sons (and daughters) of God through faith in Christ Jesus...And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.**” Galatians 3:26,29

Whether you were aware of it or not, God adopted you – if you are a believer!

Read Romans 8:1-2, 14-17

This passage in Romans teaches us that God has given us His Spirit to lead us. We are no longer bound by sin, and prisoners of the old carnal nature, to live according to the lusts of this world. We have been given a new nature, which shows us a different way to live. The life in the Spirit – although it is foreign to us – is a much better way to live. With His help, we can learn to walk in the Spirit, and to learn how to live a holy righteous life. That is what Jesus wants for you and for me. When we walk as He walked, and are led by His Spirit, then, the Bible says, we are truly His kids. (Romans 8:14)

From this passage in Romans 8, answer the following questions:

1. What have we received according to verse 15?

2. What does this verse say that we didn’t receive?

3. If we are children of God, what else have we become?

Read Romans 8:23

4. Having the first fruits of the Spirit, (now that we are reborn) what are we still eagerly waiting for?

Read John (Gospel) 1:12

5. What is the one necessary requirement for someone to become a child of God?

Read Ephesians 1:3-13

6. According to verses 4-5, how did your adoption as a son or daughter of God come about?

Take a minute to digest all of this, especially if you have not read this before. God wants you to know that He loves you unconditionally. He loves you not just as Jesus's Father, but as your own Father. You can come to Him, climb up onto His lap (figuratively speaking!) and just rest in His everlasting Arms. He knew you before the foundations of the world were set in place. He chose you for Himself. You are His beloved.

Now let's look at some of the marks of a child of God. What do His children look like?

Re-read 1 John 3:1-18

Marks of a Child of God – Complete the Sentences

1. 1 John 3:1 The world does not know us – because they did not know Him.

The world will not _____ me.

2. 1 John 3:2 As for now – we know that we are children of God. What we don't know is what God's plan is for us – what we will be. As for the future, we don't know everything, but we do know the most important thing....

When He appears we will _____, because we will _____ just as He is.

3. 1 John 3:3 We have hope based on what we just wrote. And our hope is fixed on Him. In other words, my hope is fixed on Jesus, and His faithfulness, His power, His love, His greatness. How big is your God? How much hope do you have that Jesus will do exactly as He has promised?

Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, _____ just as He is _____.

4. 1 John 3:6 No one who abides in Him sins. No one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

This can be a confusing verse. I did some research on it, and here is what I found. Don't take this verse out of context, but rather read it in light of the rest of John's letter, and the rest of Scripture. We know that in 1 John 1:8, John wrote, "*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*" John is not saying in 3:6 that when we commit a sin, we must not be abiding in Christ, and that if we commit a sin we don't really know him.

Rather, John means that someone who abides in Christ will not continually live in sin, nor follow after a pattern of sinful living, because that would be inconsistent with walking in fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Here is the Amplified Bible version of 1 John 3:6:

"No one who abides in Him (who remains united in fellowship with Him – deliberately, knowingly, and habitually) practices sin. No one who habitually sins has seen Him or known Him."

Based on 1 John 3:6, once I learn to abide in Christ and get to know Jesus, I will _____.

5. 1 John 3:7 Don't be deceived! There is a very straightforward and simple way to tell if someone is righteous.

If I am righteous as Jesus is righteous, I will _____.

6. 1 John 3:10 It is so easy to tell the children of God apart from children of the devil.

There are two things that a child of God does that a child of the devil does not do. What are they?

- **A child of God will** _____
- **A child of God will** _____

7. 1 John 3:13-14 This should not surprise us, brothers and sisters. The world will hate us. Get used to it. No matter how much we try to please them, to act like them, to be tolerant and non-judgmental, etc. they will just not love us. Why? Because they don't love our Father, or His Son, Jesus. We have the divine Spirit of God living in us. The children of the devil hate anything that is holy. We just aren't compatible!

I know that I have passed out of death into life because I _____

8. 1 John 3:16 Jesus demonstrated what agape love looks like. He laid down His life for you and for me. John says we can know what love is by learning from Jesus's example.

I ought to _____ for my brothers and sisters, if I am follower of Jesus.

As we noticed back in Week One, John tells us the truth, even when it hurts. He doesn't water things down to make it easier for us to swallow! He sets a very high bar for us, doesn't he? John is not giving us excuses for why we sometimes act like the rest of the world, and don't obey God. He is calling us out. He is telling us – if you say you are a child of God – act like one!!! He sounds like a parent talking to an older child or teenager, doesn't he?

In our American culture, there are messages that we hear (subliminally), through commercials, television, movies, internet, public places, etc. Here are a few of them:

- Spoil yourself! You deserve it. You are entitled to a break, a luxury vacation, a new outfit, or anything else that you could possibly want. It's all about you and your selfish desires.
- That person was hurtful and disappointed you. Make them sorry they did that to you. You deserve better. You have been so good and kind – how dare they treat you like that? Pay them back! Do whatever feels good.
- Jesus doesn't want you to suffer hardship of any kind. Although His apostles and the early church suffered, He wants you to have a life of happiness with no conflict, no disappointments, etc. There's no need to make a sacrifice for others, ever. Keep your money for yourself, to buy nice things that only you will enjoy. Don't worry about those less fortunate. Don't worry about telling people about Jesus or obeying His commandments. When He comes back – I'm sure He won't care what you did with your life.

These messages are everywhere we go, and every screen we watch. If I asked you to describe the last time you were tempted by one of these messages, I bet we could hear a lot of stories! Obviously, these messages we hear constantly are lies (demonic in nature). They go against what God's Word teaches, and we know that the Word of God speaks the truth. In our minds, we are always fighting a battle to decide which messages we want to keep, and which we will discard.

Christians in many other parts of the world are not hearing the same self-centered messages that we hear. They understand suffering is a part of our Christian life. They understand that this life is not all about us getting everything we want. This is not our eternal home. They understand that God gives generously and He wants us to be generous also as His children, doing what He did, sharing and showing His love.

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,” 1 Timothy 4:1

It’s important that we stay in the Word of God, so that we will not fall away as this verse in 1 Timothy says. We must not be led astray by the “*deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons*” that tell us things that are contrary to what God tells us.

*“Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”
1 John 3:3*

Take a few minutes to talk with God about this. Ask the Holy Spirit if there is anything in you that is not pure. Where do you need His help? How can you practice righteousness in that particular area?

So, in closing today’s lesson, how would you identify a child of God?

“But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:7-9

“See, how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God!” 1 John 3:1a