

**SERIES: THE PRETENDERS. PART 2: "WHO AND HOW ARE YOU LOVING?"**

**(Introduction)** Last week I mentioned counterfeiters who make fake money. There are also another type of counterfeiters in the world...those who produce fake artwork and paintings by copying the artwork of famous master artists and then signing the famous artists names to the artwork and selling the artwork as newly found, lost artwork by the famous artist. These fake artworks are bought many times for huge amounts of money. It is thought that about 20% of the artwork in museums may be fakes. There is even a special museum in Vienna, Austria for fake artwork called, "The Museum of Fake Art." These fake works of art look like the real thing...but they are not. Regrettably many people who call themselves "Christians" are in fact like these fake works of art. What if many of our churches are filled with "fake Christians"? What is many churches are like "Museums of Fake Christians"?

The New Testament book of 1 John has a lot information about what it means to be an authentic Christian. We're doing a 3 part series called "THE PRETENDERS." Last week we began this series by focusing on **1 John 3:1-10** and asking this question, "**WHAT ARE YOU PRACTICING?**" In other words, are you living like a Christian? Do the practices of your life demonstrate authentic Christianity, or are you just a "pretender?" Do you live your life like you belong to God...like He is your Father? Do you live your life with the hope of the return of Christ? Are you living your life in tune what Jesus came to do - take away sin and destroy the works of the devil? Are you living your life dwelling in Christ...fellowshipping with Him? All those things were in **1 John 3:1-10**.

Today we are asking this question: "**WHO AND HOW ARE YOU LOVING?**" Look again at our key verse from last week - "By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." (**1 John 3:10 ESV**). So an authentic Christian is supposed to practice righteousness...**AND AN AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN IS TO LOVE OTHER CHRISTIANS!** You might expand that and say "We are to love other people." Jesus said, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." 31 The second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these." (**Mark 12:30-31**). "**Neighbor**" means who ever you are in close proximity to, wherever you are. Based upon 1 John, we are to **LOVE OTHER CHRISTIANS!** In fact, **1 John 3:10** said, "**If you don't love your brother it is evidence you are the child of the devil!**" (Serious stuff!!!)

But 1 John has a lot more to say about love! So, while this may get a little or a lot uncomfortable for some of us...we need to "go there"...we need to ask ourselves "**WHO AND HOW ARE WE LOVING?**"...because the answer to that question has significant truth concerning whether we are authentic Christians or just merely "Pretenders."

**1. "WHO AND HOW WE ARE LOVING" SHOULD BE MOTIVATED BY GOD'S LOVE.**

**1 John 4:7-11** - "7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 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. 10 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. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." **ESV** "**Love**" - is the "agape" God type of love; a love of affection based in benevolence or charity. It is a love given...not a love earned. Some forms of the word used in these passages in 1 John also speak of love in a social or moral sense. **It comes from a root word meaning "much."**

- **The ENCOURAGEMENT to Love.** "7a - Beloved, let us love one another..." Remember we are to love one another...not because they are lovely...or loving themselves. We are not encouraged to love others based upon their deserving our love. We are to love them with God's benevolent love, a love of charity that we offer to them, irregardless of their deserving that love. And this is a reciprocal type of love... "let us love one another."
- **The EXISTENCE or ORIGIN of Love.** "7b - "...for love is from God,..." We should so love one another because such benevolent, underserved **love exists!** **Love is from God...**and as those who claim to be Christians, **we are to take the love we receive from God and share it with others.**
- **The EVIDENCE of Love.** "7c-8 - ...and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." Now here is another serious statement in 1 John. The practice of God's love in our lives is an indicator...it is evidence, concerning our authenticity as Christians! If we love with God's type of love, it shows we have been

born of God and know Him. If we do not love with God's type of love, it reveals we are "pretenders" and don't really know God! **Why is this so? BECAUSE GOD IS BENEVOLENT, CHARITABLE LOVE!** (Note: John did not say, "Love is God" but "God...by His very nature...IS LOVE!")

- **The EXAMPLE of Love.** "v9-11a - 9 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. 10 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. 11 **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**" The love of God was or is made manifest, or is clearly seen through the sacrificial love of God sending His Son...to die for our sins so we can have real spiritual and eternal life through Him. ("**manifest**" - to come out into the open or be made public."). **God put His love "out in the open" and "made a public display" of His love by nailing His Son to the cross for our sins!** To display and prove His love for us, God sent Jesus to be the full payment...the propitiation...the atonement for our sins...the payment that He made for us. **SO GOD'S LOVE HE DISPLAYED IS SACRIFICIAL LOVE...AND AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE TO ALSO PRACTICE AND DISPLAY SACRIFICIAL LOVE. WE ARE NOT TO SIMPLY LOVE THOSE WHO LOVE US...WE ARE TO LOVE OTHERS WITH GOD'S LOVE...MAKING A CHOICE TO LOVE OTHERS WHETHER THEY LOVE US OR NOT...WHETHER THEY DESERVE IT OR NOT.** Jump down to verse 19 - **1 John 4:19** - "We love because he first loved us." **ESV**

## 2. "WHO AND HOW WE ARE LOVING" SHOULD **DEMONSTRATE GOD'S LOVE.**

**1 John 4:12-16** - "12 **No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.** 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 **And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.** 15 **Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.** 16 **So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**" **ESV**

People cannot just look and see God. **BUT THEY CAN SEE GOD IN THE WAY WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER!** If you are a Christian, God abides ("**stays**") in you ("**Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.**")...and His love should be displayed through your life. Because God is love, whoever abides ("**stays**") in God's love, also abides ("**stays**") in God...and God abides ("**stays**") in that person. So others can see God...see what God is like...if we will demonstrate the love of God through our lives! Jesus said this - **John 13:34-35** - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: **just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**" **ESV. MAYBE PEOPLE ARE NOT CONVINCED THERE IS A GOD BECAUSE WE HAVE FAILED TO DEMONSTRATE GOD'S LOVE THROUGH OUR LIVES!**

## 3. "WHO AND HOW WE ARE LOVING" **CAN PROVIDE CONFIDENCE** CONCERNING THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT.

**1 John 4:17-18** - "17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." **ESV**

**God's type of love, impacting our lives to the degree we practice God's love toward others, is one way God's love is perfected in us. So loving others gives us additional confidence we are authentic Christians instead of just "pretenders." In other words, the way we love others gives us additional evidence we really know God and have experienced His love!** Note the phrase, "**as He is so also are we in this world.**" **As Christ is representing us in heaven...so we should be representing Him in this world before others. As God's love is in heaven, so should God's love be displayed in our lives here in the world.**

**Because of God's love for us...clearly demonstrated through Christ...and the additional evidence of us practicing God's love toward others...we should have no fear concerning judgment. Jesus took our judgment for us on the cross...but also because we have the evidence of God's love in our lives, His perfect love drives out fear. Fear has to do with**

punishment...which Christ took for us. So if you know for sure you know Him, there is no reason to have fear concerning the day of judgment.

4. **“WHO AND HOW WE ARE LOVING” PROVIDES EVIDENCE AS TO WHETHER A PERSON IS AN AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN OR JUST A PRETENDER.**

In this last thought, before we bring this message to a close, I want us to be confronted with some serious statements concerning **“Who and How we are loving.”**

- **1 John 4:20-21** - 20 **If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.** 21 **And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.** **ESV.** No matter **“what you say”** about loving God...if you hate others...especially if you hate some other Christian, **the Bible says you are a liar concerning loving God!** John illustrates this by showing how utterly foolish it is to claim you love God, and hate another Christian. **How can you say you love God...when you have never literally seen God...and at the same time hate another person who you can see! Hey...if you are saved and the other person is saved...you are going to have to be around each other for a long time in heaven...if you go there. SO YOU BETTER LEARN HOW TO LOVE EACH OTHER AND LIVE TOGETHER IN FELLOWSHIP HERE!** Notice the command given...**FROM HIM... “...whoever loves God must also love his brother.”** **THERE IS NO ROOM FOR HATRED AMONG BELIEVERS IN THE FAMILY OF GOD!**
- **1 John 3:11-23** - 11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, **that we should love one another.** **(EXAMPLE)** - 12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? **Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.** **(Maybe you need to evaluate why you dislike or hate someone.)** 13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. 14 **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.** **(Evidence of being authentic or a pretender)** 15 **Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.** **(This refers to practicing murder. Remember David murdered...Moses murdered...etc...)** 16 **By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.** **(Sacrificial love we should practice)** 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, **how does God's love abide in him?** 18 Little children, **let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.** **(More evidence as to who we really are based upon who and how we are loving.)** 19 **By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;** 20 for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. 21 **Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;** 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 23 **And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us.”** **ESV**
- **1 John 2:15-17** - 15 **Do not love the world or the things in the world.** If anyone loves the world, **the love of the Father is not in him.** 16 For all that is in the world— **the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.** 17 **And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.** **ESV**

**(Conclusion) “WHO AND HOW ARE YOU LOVING?”** Ask yourself honestly, **“Do I love other Christians?” “Is there someone I hate?”** Do you understand hate leads to things like murder...even if you are just “murdering” the reputation of the other person by talking about them??? **Are you motivated by the Love God has for you in sending His Son to die for you?** You didn't deserve that love...so if others don't seem to deserve such love...love them anyway! **Are you demonstrating the sacrificial love of God for others to see?** **Can others see God through the way you love???** **Does the way you love others provide you extra confidence concerning the day of judgment?** What does **“WHO AND HOW YOU ARE LOVING”** say about **WHO YOU ARE?** **What evidence is provided by who and how you are loving?** Do you really love others? Do you really love God? Or are you loving the world and the things of the world? **Are you an authentic Christian, or a “Pretender?”** **Are you an “artwork by God” ...touched by the Master...demonstrating His love...or are you a fake artwork?**