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1 John 4:7–21 (CSB) 7 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent his Son as the world’s Savior. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God remains in him and he in God. 16 And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. 17 In this, love is made complete with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love. 19 ***We love because he first loved us.*** 20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

Gospel Love: to cherish someone with affection, care, and loyalty because that is how Jesus has loved you.

2. John tells us that God is love. This doesn't mean that God is *only* love, but he is telling us that at the core of who God is, love is one of the things that describes Him the most. And we see this in that God sent His own Son to die in our place. Take a minute to think about v. 10 - consider the cost of God's love in Jesus on the cross, the life that you enjoy because of it, and how freely it was given to you. What reaction does this stir within you? Is it easy to believe? How can you grow in knowing and believing (v. 16) this love?

[illegible]

3. John talks about this phrase of being “made complete” (v. 12) by the love that God has for us, which refers to God’s designated purpose for His love - to transform us from the inside out. That process begins the moment God brings us to Jesus and we place our trust in Him, when He begins to show us His love, and make us look more like Him in heart and action. Thinking about this, when has God’s love changed the way you love Him and others in your walk with Him?

4. John points to the moment where we all must stand before Jesus, whether its when we die or when He returns (v. 17). Thinking of that moment - what is your confidence that He will accept you? How do you know that He will accept you on that day? Is it the perfect love of God or your own goodness? Are you afraid of what God will say to you on that day? Or do you expect the embrace of your Savior who died for you?

5. John is clear that the result of God’s love is to produce love for God and for your brothers and sisters in Christ (and all those around you!). There are so many applications of this, but what it really looks like is: loving others with Gospel Love (see definition above). Gospel Love is essentially loving others the way Jesus loves you. Reflect on Ephesians 4:31-32 - how does the way Jesus loves you set you free to love like that verse commands you? Where in your life do you struggle to love like this?

Time of Prayer:

In our passage, John points to the need for us to know and believe day by day the love that God has for us. Take some time to pray the Apostle Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3 -

Ephesians 3:14–21 (CSB) 14 For this reason I kneel before the Father 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. 16 I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, 17 and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God’s love, 19 and to know Christ’s love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.