

# Wednesday Night Bible Study

with Dr. Chuck Ward

Current Scripture Series

**Anchored to the Truth: Insights for Living from 1 John**

Tonight's Study

**Love: The Transforming Power of His Presence**

**Scripture Passage: 1 John 4:14-21**

The Lord Jesus desires us to grow in our capacity to love him and our fellow believers.

That love is somewhat comparable to the love relationship between two people. When a husband and wife are in love, they think about, communicate, and relate everything to the other person. Taking the other person into consideration is not forced. It happens because of love.

Knowledge of and obedience to the Word of God can produce either a modern-day Pharisee or a faithful Christian. The difference is love.

The Lord captures the motivation for perfect obedience to the Word of God in the upper room: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15).

Love is the first aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

Love is a "more excellent way" than even the "higher (spiritual) gifts" (1 Cor 12:31).

Love is the greatest of the enduring qualities of "faith, hope, and love" (1 Cor 13:13).

Before he returned to heaven, Jesus had at least one one-on-one meeting with the apostle Peter. For Peter, it was evidently soul-searching and, possibly, at times, a painful conversation. In John 21:15-19, Peter, who had denied the Lord three times, was asked three times by Jesus, "Do you love me?"

The Lord did not reprimand Peter for his lack of faith and the resulting denials; instead, he forced Peter to examine his own heart by asking, "Do you love me?"

The love of God is to become increasingly characteristic of our love for God and fellow believers.

## **1. Whoever confesses that Jesus is God's provision for our salvation enters a relationship with God characterized by love (1 Jn 4:14-16).**

- a. This acknowledgment or confession (ὁμολογέω = homologeo) is a public statement that something is objectively true (e.g., 1 Jn 1:9).
- b. It is based upon the testimony of eyewitnesses who personally knew the Lord Jesus, who perceived the more profound meaning of his life, and who testified to his saving work (v. 14).
- c. The person who makes such a confession abides (μένω = "meno") in God, and God abides in the person (v. 15).
- d. The person who confessed Jesus at a point in the past underwent two changes that will last forever (v. 16a).
  - i. First, they came to know the love God has for them.
  - ii. Second, they came to believe or rely on God's love for them.
- e. The person with this salvation experience concludes that "God is love" (v. 16b).
- f. If we abide "in the love" of God, we will abide in God, and God will abide in us (v. 16c).

2. **The relationship we have with God is designed to change our character, so we become more like his (v. 17).**
  - a. As we abide “in **the** love” of God, our love will be perfected (τελειόω = “teleiōō”).
  - b. The word translated “perfected” means “complete (e.g., one’s course in Acts 20:24), bring to an end... to make complete or perfect... completeness...” (Exegetical Dictionary of the Greek New Testament).
3. **We know we are being transformed by living in His love when our aptitudes and actions represent God as Jesus Christ did on earth (v. 17).**
  - a. Jesus’ glory was “as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).
  - b. Jesus did what humanity was originally designed to do before the fall (Gen 1:26-27).
  - c. Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15).
  - d. In the Lord, we are restored or reborn to fulfill our ultimate destiny.
4. **We know we are being transformed by living in His love when we have confidence for the day of judgment (vv. 17-18).**
  - a. A day of judgment is coming for believers (1 Cor 3:10-15).
  - b. As our love matures and we increasingly trust God’s love for us, we become confident about judgment (v. 17).
  - c. The first use of “Confidence” in the history of the Greek language was political in nature, meaning “the right to make one’s thoughts known, to say what one will.” Subsequently, it came to represent “hardiness, courage... confidence...” (Theological Lexicon of the New Testament).
  - d. The love John cites in v. 18 as being fearless is unique.
    - i. In human relationships, it is sometimes the case that a husband or wife will love his or her spouse but fear that the other person might be unfaithful.
    - ii. In many relationships, love and fear seem to coexist.
    - iii. John literally writes, “There is no fear in **the** love” (v. 18). In context, “**the** love,” the apostle is ` is the love that is characteristic of the nature of God.
    - iv. When the love we have for God is matured by our relationship and fellowship with him, it casts out fear.
5. **We know we are being transformed by living in His love when we have love for our fellow believers (vv. 19-21).**
  - a. Our love for God is reciprocal. We love in response to his love for us (v. 19).
  - b. “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor 5:14-15).
  - c. John addresses the false claim that a person can love God while hating a brother (v. 20).
    - i. John’s reasoning is from the lesser to the greater.
    - ii. If a person chooses not to love a brother who can be seen, he lacks the capacity to love God, who cannot be seen.
    - iii. Hating a brother creates a power shortage. It results in a lack of the power (δύναμις = “dunamai”) the Holy Spirit gives us to love.

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love” (John 15:9).**