

SESSION 2

GOD IS LOVING



What makes you love someone?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLoving

THE POINT

God's love empowers me to love.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

There's power behind the throne.

Great leaders in history rarely stand alone. Whether you study ancient kings or modern movers and shakers in the business world, there is often someone (or several people) standing in the background to give advice and counsel. Such people exert a power and influence that isn't openly seen. But it *is* felt.

You may not be a king, but there is a power that motivates and influences your actions and behavior. For some of us, the “power behind the throne” comes from friends, a demanding employer, or a persistent spouse. We can also be influenced by the sway of the crowd or by slick marketing messages.

Thankfully, love may be the most potent “mover and shaker” in our lives. We discover in God a love that endures, a love that persists no matter what, and a love that always seeks our best. The Book of 1 John helps us discover the beauty of God's love—a love that is poured out on us so that His love can pour through us.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 John 4:7-12 (HCSB)

- 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 propitiation 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 perfected in us.

Key Words

Propitiation (v. 10)—This term refers to a sin offering designed to appease God's wrath against the sinner. Since God alone can forgive sin, His righteous indignation against sin must be satisfied.

Remains (v. 12)—God lives within believers. His presence is sensed as believers love one another. He remains, abides, and dwells in the hearts of those who love Him.

Perfected (v. 12)—The biblical meaning refers to something being completed, accomplished, or finished. As we walk with God, we reach His goal of loving others.



1 John 4:7-8

We were created with the capacity to love and be loved. While God has graciously given us many ways to know and experience this unconditional acceptance and affection—such as family, friends, or a spouse—our need for love is truly filled only by God Himself. God is love. And without a relationship with a loving God, we will always feel a void deep in our hearts.

It's a great gift to discover God not only has love and gives love, but that He *is* love. Whereas holiness is the fundamental characteristic of God's Person, love might be called His primary moral attribute. Love is what God is all about. God's love empowers us to love ourselves and others. That's why the apostle John exhorted us to love one another. Christians are to love other Christians because we are spiritual brothers and sisters in God's family. Our genuine love for one another indicates to others that we are God's children.

Sadly, not everyone is easy to love. Not even us! This passage teaches that our love for other believers is not something that springs out of our own natural goodness. Instead, verse 7 says we should love one another "because love is from God." For Christians, a loving spirit is a by-product of a "new birth" in Christ.

Here's how it works:

1. When we accept God's love and trust Him, He imparts His Spirit into us.
2. The Spirit of God makes us new creations.
3. It is by the presence of God's Holy Spirit that His love flows through us.

This love is not actually from us, but from God Himself. And He intends for love's transformative power to flow toward even the most despicable people—not just to those in the family of God. To make himself clear, John reiterated this truth by saying that if we don't allow God to love others through our lives, then we don't personally know Him.

How does the statement "God is love" differ from saying "God loves"?

QUESTION #2

"When God wanted to inform us about who He is and what He is like, He came in person!"

—FREDDY CARDOZA

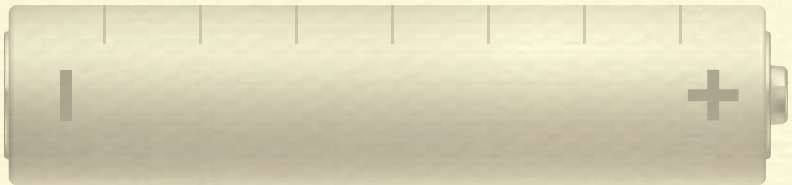
POWER TO LOVE

Use the following gauges to measure your experiences with receiving and reflecting God's love.

To what degree have you experienced God's love in recent months?



Right now, how motivated are you to reflect God's love to others?



What can you learn by comparing both measurements?

What do you find remarkable in verses 9-10?

QUESTION #3

1 John 4:9-10

We know about the love of God because His love was “revealed” (v. 9). It’s interesting that God did not merely tell us about His love; He showed it. When God wanted to inform us about who He is and what He is like, He came in person. God came in a human body that was both fully divine and fully human—the God-Man Jesus Christ.

God sent Christ as the Messiah—the Savior of the world. As Messiah, Jesus offered His life, crucified, as the only possible propitiation for all our sins. *Propitiation* means “a holy payment that satisfies the righteous anger of God.” The death of Jesus paid for the condition of human sin. The resurrection exhibited Jesus’ power over death, with death being the very thing He endured to pay the price of sin.

When God sent His Son to become the sacrifice for our sins, He substituted Jesus’ perfect payment for sin in place of our imperfect and inadequate one. In doing so, atonement was made, making all who receive this gift of salvation “at one” with God.

The result of our atonement?

- ▶ Peace with God
- ▶ Freedom from sin
- ▶ The ultimate power over death: everlasting life.

Why did God do this? Was it because our love for Him merited such an unspeakable gift? Hardly. Verse 10 makes it clear that God loved us first. The emphasis is not on our love for Him, but on His love for us.

God knew we needed His help. And even when we live in conscious or ignorant rebellion of Him, He still loves us. Jesus died to eliminate the penalty and power of sin over us. So even though we sometimes fail, we are not failures. We can become whole and holy when we receive God’s love into our lives.

When have you sensed God’s love and power at work in your life?

QUESTION #4

1 John 4:11-12

What is the greatest force in the universe? Scientists may point to gravity, electromagnetism, or super massive black holes—but I believe a force exists that is even greater than those: God’s love.

The power of God’s love gives us the ability to love the unlovely and the unlovable. Through God’s love, we find the grace to unconditionally accept people whose actions are unacceptable. Of course, our unconditional love for others is no indication that we agree with their behavior, just as God’s love for us is not an endorsement of the way we have sinned against Him.

This is one of the greatest truths of the Bible: God loves us. Let that truth sink in. Our lives are in trouble if our relationship with God rests primarily on us. God knows we are prone to wander. We do nothing to make God love us; He just loves us. Our response is to love Him and love those He loves. That’s what verse 11 means when the apostle John gently appealed to believers as friends. He used a conditional statement: “If God loved us in this way, [then] we also must love one another.” As recipients of God’s love, we are obligated to love others. Because God has loved us at our worst, He has the moral authority to command us to do likewise.

God’s desire is for us to live in His love and to share that same love with others. Although God Himself is invisible, He is clearly seen in our lives as we demonstrate His great love to others. The bold witness of unconditional love will draw others into an everlasting relationship with God through Christ.

How will being loved by God shape the way you live?

QUESTION #5



LIVE IT OUT

How can you let God's love shape your day-to-day life?

- ▶ **Embrace God's love.** Pray specifically for God to help you understand, believe, and receive His love for you today.
- ▶ **Reflect God's love.** Before the day is over, make an effort to express love to someone in a way that mirrors God's love for you. (*Note: this experience will be most powerful if you're able to express love to someone who doesn't deserve it.*)
- ▶ **Seek reconciliation.** Identify a relationship that's been strained or broken in recent years. Let God's empowering love be the catalyst for you to request or offer forgiveness in that relationship as a step toward reconciliation.



There's definitely "power behind the throne." Let your power be God's love. Let it be the motivator in your life—the force that influences your actions and your behavior each day.

Love Is Greater Than Our Sins



I want our kids to know that in our family, we mess up, we fess up, we own up, and we make up.

It's just that simple.



To continue reading "Love Greater Than Our Sins" from *HomeLife* magazine, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



My group's prayer requests

A series of 18 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

My thoughts