

“Love Your Body” (1 John 4:7–21)

Today the physical body is one of the most promoted entities in the world. If you watch TV, you’ve seen exercise infomercials guaranteed to transform your body. If you surf the Web, you’ve come across diet and supplement advertisements. In the past two weeks, MSN has carried separate headline stories on the right cut of swimsuit for women and men who look good in swim trunks. We are bombarded with the idolatry of physical bodies. The media seems to be saying, “Love your body.” In other words, nourish and cherish your own physical body. You deserve to look the best. Work out at the right gym. Take the right supplements. Get that enlargement. Get that reduction. Whatever you do, be sure to “love your body.”

I’m sorry to say that you and I have been sold a bad bill of goods. While diet and exercise are important, they are never to result in self-love. However, the New Testament is clear that you’re to *love your body*. But this form of “body love” is in reference to your love relationship with the local church. You’re commanded to *love your body*, meaning that you’re to have God’s love for the Christian brothers and sisters that He’s placed in your life. The apostle John, the beloved disciple, discusses the importance of love in 1 John 4:7–21.¹ In this section, John provides two principal reasons you should *love your body*.

1. Your love for believers reveals God (4:7–12). In this section, John answers the question, “Why should Christians bother loving one another?” Since millions of Christians throughout the US are abandoning the church, why should we persevere with a community of imperfect Christians? John writes, **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”** (4:7). On three separate occasions in this chapter, John uses the word “beloved” (*agapetos*) to address his readers (4:1, 7, 11).² It’s important to note that he’s not writing to determine whether his readers are saved or not—he clearly believes they are (cf. 2:12–14). The apostle is writing to encourage saved people to live saved lives.³ In this thematic verse, John implies that the greatest external evidence that we’re saved and mature is our love for one another (cf. 13:34–35).⁴

Our culture uses the word “love” in many different ways: “I love pizza!” “I love skiing!” “I love scrap-booking.” We often think that love is a sentimental, sugary feeling. So we need to remember the biblical definition of love. *Agape* love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.⁵ At its heart *agape* love is a *commitment*, and thus it may be commanded. The goal of this commitment is the highest good of the one loved. Have you made a commitment to love your fellow Christians? Do you want the highest good for your church? Are you constantly asking the question: What can I sacrifice to help Emmanuel become the church that God desires her to be?

John is both an idealist and a realist so in 4:8 he provides the converse to 4:7. **“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”**⁶ In 4:7, John uses two descriptive phrases: “born of God” and “knows God,” yet in 4:8 he eliminates the phrase “born of God.”⁷ This is very significant.⁸ There are plenty of Christians “born of God” who don’t love! This is one of the greatest black eyes to the cause of Christianity. John’s point is it’s possible to be saved and not love, but it’s impossible to be mature and not love! Salvation is distinguished from dedication or spiritual maturity. If we desire spiritual maturity we must be Christians who love one another. Love is the chief indication of spiritual maturity.⁹

Perhaps you’ve assumed that you really “know God.” You’re involved in the church—you serve, you give, and you even study the Bible. Yet, there is another brother or sister in Christ that you don’t love. Maybe there are even a handful of people that you have ill-will toward. John would say that at this moment in your experience, you don’t know God. You’re out of fellowship with Him because you’re out of fellowship with His kids. John explains the logic of this: “God is love.” Love flows from God as naturally as water flows from a spring. He cannot do anything else but love! God is the source of love; He’s the origin of love. Love doesn’t define God, rather God defines love.¹⁰

Okay, okay, that preaches well but practically speaking how can we love one another? The first step in learning to love is recognizing that it's impossible to truly love anyone apart from God. If we want to become better lovers of people we need to first understand how God loves. Fortunately, 4:9–10 tell us five aspects about God's love.

- 1) **God's love is visible.** John writes, **"By this the love of God was manifested in us"** (4:9a). Any invisible love is non-God love. You can't say, "Well, I love so-and-so in my heart." God's love is more than verbal, it's practical intangible (3:16–18).¹¹
- 2) **God's love is decisive.** John informs us that **"God has sent His only begotten Son¹² into the world"** (4:9b). God did something definitive by sending Jesus. We must make a decision that we're going to love the body of Christ, and then daily decide to renew our initial commitment.
- 3) **God's love is purposeful.** John states God's purpose in 4:9c: **". . . so that we might live through Him."** It's something of a paradox that Christ had to die so that we may live through Him. God didn't just save us for heaven; He saved us for earth. He wants more than living in us; He wants to live *through* us. God isn't merely after a few random acts of love. Rather, He wants us to exhibit a lifestyle of love.
- 4) **God's love is intuitive.** John puts it like this: **"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us"** (4:10a). Love springs forth unconditionally from who He is. He manifested His love based upon His grace. Likewise, we must love believers whether they are "worthy" or not. We must base our love on a decision of our will.
- 5) **God's love is just.** John closes 4:10 by stating that God **"sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."** The word "propitiation" (*hilasmos*) means a sacrifice that turns away God's wrath (cf. 2:2). God was angry about sin, so He sent Jesus Christ to appease or satisfy His wrath toward our sin. This was the ultimate expression of "tough love!" *Agape* love often requires tough love. Love is *not* a touchy-feely, warm, fuzzy, goose bump, "can't we all just get along?" attitude. In fact, it may be that the most loving thing you can do for a person is to share a rebuke or a challenge. *Agape* love is both tough and tender.

We've just looked at five aspects of God's love; now, what should our response be to God's love? In 4:11, John writes, **"Beloved, if [since]¹³ God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."** Why should we love other believers? Because God loves all of us! The verb translated "ought" (*opheilo*) carries the idea of "owing a debt."¹⁴ Financial debt affects Christians and non-Christians alike. It's an epidemic in our country. But the truth is if we have a debt, we are responsible to repay that debt.

My kid's don't like Saturdays very much. On Saturdays we have family chores. On weekdays, Lori and I may pay a child for inside or outside work. But come Saturday, our children have chores because they are a part of the Krell family. When (not if) they whine, I tell them what their mother went through to bring them into the world. I also remind them that we provide for their food, clothing, and shelter. I then say, "You are obligated to serve. Being a part of our family bears some responsibilities and obligations." Although God's love for us is unconditional, we ought to live for Him since He died for us. This is just a part of being a member of God's family.

Why is it so important for you and me to fulfill this love debt? In 4:12a John says, **"No one has beheld God at any time."** What he means by this is no one has seen God in His pure essence without some kind of filter.¹⁵ Instances in which the biblical writers said that people saw God were visual representations of God's glory.¹⁶ At first glance this phrase seems like a non sequitur. Why mention this here? What's the point? The point is: No man can see the essence of God, but men can see the *action* of God. The only way that people see God today is when they see Christians loving one another in a biblical way. I like to say, "We're the continuation of the incarnation." The incarnation means "in flesh" and refers to the Christmas story when Jesus became a man. Jesus is now at the right hand of God the Father praying for you and me; hence, our goal is to continue a Godlike life in human flesh. This is fulfilled when you *love your body*.

One dark night, a little boy, frightened by a thunderous lightening storm, called out, “Daddy, come here! I’m scared!” “Son” the father said, “God loves you and He’ll take care of you.” “I know God loves me,” the boy replied. “But right now I want somebody who has skin on!” This world will never see God, but we ought to have such a love for our brothers and sisters in Christ that we become God with skin on. We’re to pick up where Jesus left off and love God’s kids.

In 4:12b, John promises two blessing if you love other believers: **“if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.”**¹⁷ The word “if” (*ei*) indicates a condition that must be met. IF we love our fellow Christians, two important events occur: (1) *God abides in us*. That is, we consciously enjoy His blessings in our lives. His indwelling presence becomes a reality. Others become aware that God is with us and in us.¹⁸ (2) *God’s love is perfected in us*. In this case, the word “perfected” (*telioo*) doesn’t mean to improve or make better. It means “to complete, to finish, to bring to its goal, to bring to full measure.”¹⁹ God wants the people of the world to see His love expressed through His children. If we simply love one another we’ll experience an intimate, abiding relationship with God, and His love will be perfected in us.²⁰

[The first reason that you should love your body is: Your love for believers reveals God. The second reason that you should love your body is . . .]

2. Your love for believers provides confidence before God (4:13–21).²¹ One of the questions you may be asking is, “But can this *agape* love really become a reality in my life?” In 4:13, John writes, **“By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”** Before we begin, it is important to recognize that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the most tangible evidence of God’s love in our lives. With that said, notice the latter half of 4:13. John does not say we will be able to abide in God and love the way that He loves “because He has given us His Spirit.” John says, “He has given us of His Spirit.” John is literally saying, God has given us “out of His Spirit,” the enablement and empowerment that is necessary to love biblically.²² The Holy Spirit doesn’t just regenerate, indwell, baptize, and seal us the moment we’re saved. God also uses the Holy Spirit to activate our love lives. He alone is the agent who makes this possible.²³

This type of supernatural love ought to lead to non-Christians looking at you and asking, “How can you love like that?” So stop for just a moment and ask yourself, “is there anything supernatural about my love for others?” Then stop and ask yourself: Who are the unlovable people in your life? Is it your own spouse? Is it one of your children? Perhaps it is your dad or mom or a brother or sister? Maybe it is a member of your small group? I don’t know who the Lord has just brought to your mind. But I do know this: God wants you to love that person with His love. Today, will you commit yourself to relying upon the Holy Spirit to love those that you are convinced that you can’t love?

Whether we’re aware of it or not, when we make a decision to love one another we become witnesses. Verses 14–16 tell us that our abiding relationship results in a witness. In 4:14, John pens it like this: **“We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”** God’s presence is observable in the midst of Christians who love one another. God produces that love. Most of John’s readers had not, and all of us have not, seen Jesus Christ in the flesh as the apostles did. However, we can see God too, and can bear witness with the apostles that God sent Jesus Christ into the world. We can share the apostles’ experience that John said was his goal in writing this epistle (1:1–4). We can see God, both in the manifestation of His love and in His life behind that love as we observe Christians loving one another. This verse then is a high point in John’s argument. This is the only place in John’s epistles where he uses the term “Savior.”²⁴ He seems to be saying, “When we love one another, we best display the Savior of the world!” This is another tremendous reminder of just how important it is that you and I love our brothers and sisters in Christ. *Love your body.*

In 4:15–16, John transitions to discuss the importance of abiding and allowing our love to become a witness. **“Whoever confesses²⁵ that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.²⁶ We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”²⁷** In the last phrase of 4:16 John uses the verb “abides” (*meno*) three times. This word means “to remain, continue, and dwell with.” John isn’t speaking of salvation, being “born of God” (cf. 4:7). Rather, he’s referring to the dynamic life of intimacy and fellowship that follows belief in Christ. When we abide in God by loving our fellow believers in Christ, He in turn abides in us.

So what difference does a loving witness make? Verses 17–18 tell us it makes all the difference in the world. In 4:17, John writes, **“By this, love is perfected with²⁸ us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.”** This verse brings to light the phrase “the day of judgment.” John is referring here to the judgment seat of Christ. He is saying, on the day of judgment we may have confidence. This word “confidence” (*parresia*) or “boldness” carries with it the idea of “freedom of speech.”²⁹ The apostle is saying that we don’t need to fear the judgment seat of Christ if we’ve demonstrated love to others. Instead, we can have confidence! By loving others we become like Jesus Christ, our Judge. Therefore, to give love is to gain confidence. The final phrase in 4:17 is often overlooked. Many people don’t want to read these words literally because they seem so strong. Quite simply, John says: We’re the equal of Christ in the world. Who is Christ? He’s the Son of God, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Who are we? We are sons and daughters of God. What is Christ doing? He’s perfectly demonstrating the love of God. What are we to do? We’re to demonstrate the love of God. As He is, so also are we in this world.

John continues this theme in 4:18 when he writes, **“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”** John insists that when we love others we have no basis for fear as we anticipate the judgment seat of Christ.³⁰ A believer who does not love others feels guilty and fears meeting his Judge—perhaps subconsciously, if not consciously. This fear is a punishment. His guilty conscience punishes him. A Christian who loves others may have other fears, but he need not fear the judgment seat of Christ. The fact that he loves others demonstrates that his relationship with God is essentially what it should be. Do you want to have greater confidence in your Christian life? Commit to love those in your sphere of influence. Do you want to be set free from apprehension surrounding the judgment seat of Christ? Love the body of Christ. The Christian life is very simple: Love God and love others (Matt 22:37–40).

In 4:19–21, John summarizes his sermonette. Beginning in 4:19, John writes these simple words: **“We love, because He first loved us.”** If you’re married, you understand this verse. Most likely, one of you put the moves on! In most cases, it was the man. He wooed you to himself. John is saying that God took the initiative. He didn’t wait for you to seek Him, believe in Him, and show Him love. He loved you before all of creation. He chose to love you in spite of knowing how we would behave. On account of all that He’s done, your natural response should be to love. A constant reminder of what Christ did for you on the cross will ensure that loving others will not be a burden.

In 4:20–21, the beloved disciple closes out by going for our jugular. He states, **“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates [i.e., refuses to love] his brother,³¹ he is a liar;³² for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”** John doesn’t say that a brother who doesn’t love is mistaken or misguided. He calls him “a liar!” Those are some fighting words! But John means business. He’s tired of Christians talking “God-talk” without living out a “God-walk.” Love is dependent upon action, not vocabulary. How can we love someone we’ve never seen? Loving someone we’ve never seen can only be validated by loving whom we have seen. So John insists that we’re only rightly related to Him when we’re rightly related to our brothers or sisters.

Verse 21 is especially clear that God commands us to love both Himself and our brothers, not just Himself.³³ God's one commandment, while singular in form, has joined together love for God and love for one another (cf. 3:23).³⁴ Both aspects are crucial to obedience for they are two sides of the same coin.

There are many people at Emmanuel who really love me. They write me cards and e-mails of encouragement. They verbally affirm me. They show me physical affection. They send me occasional cash gifts or gift cards. They give me their time and expertise. I feel their love. But the people who really want to express their deep love for me love my kids. They call them by name. Instead of talking to me on Sunday morning, they look for one of my kids. They verbally affirm my children. They take an interest in their lives. They take my kids out on a date. There are some people in our church who show the depth of their love for me by loving my kids. You see, if someone claims to love me, he or she must love my children. My children are an extension of me. God feels the same way. He wants us to love His kids. If you're looking for the greatest way to express your love to God, love His children.

Scripture References

1 John 4:7–21
1 John 2:7–11; 3:10–24
Matthew 5:11, 44
John 1:18; 3:16–18
John 13:34–35
John 17:22–26
Romans 5:6–10

Study Questions

1. John commands us to love one another (1 John 4:7–21). *Agape* love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved. How do I model *agape* in the following relationships: spouse, children, extended family, boss, coworkers, church members, and neighbors? In what specific relationship do I struggle to exhibit *agape*? Why is this? What can I do about it?
2. Practically, how should we show love to a difficult person? Do we confront his or her sin or overlook it? Where are the boundaries? Does loving someone (biblically) require liking or trusting him or her? Why or why not? What is the difference? What concrete action is God leading me to take this week to express love for someone I find unlovable?
3. In 1 John 4:9–10, John tells us five things about God’s love. Which of these characteristics is the most meaningful to me? Why? In what way will I implement this characteristic or behavior in my own life? Who can help me become a more loving person?
4. John states that fear can keep us from loving others and being confident at the judgment seat of Christ (1 John 4:17–18). What fears have held me back from loving others? How will I strive to resolve these fears? Read 2 Timothy 1:7.
5. John informs us that loving God and loving other believers are two sides of the same coin (1 John 4:20–21). Have I ever considered that loving my fellow believers may be the most important spiritual discipline I practice? What will this realization mean for me? How should I spend my time? Do I need to adjust my priorities?

Notes

¹ The word “love” (*agape*) occurs 32 times in 1 John 4:7–5:3 (40 times overall). In 1 John 4:1–6, John includes a parenthetical passage dealing with false teachers and truth and error. These six verses are not a brief biblical burp. John perfectly interrupts the flow of his argument with this important news flash: When truth is extracted from love we have been robbed of love. John is exhorting us to be careful not to believe wrong information. True love cannot be present apart from truth.

² Both 1 John 4:7 and 4:11 begin with the author addressing the readers as (*agapetoi*, “beloved”), so 4:7–10 appears to be a discrete unit, with 4:11 marking the beginning of another unit.

³ The term *agapomen* (“let us love one another”) is a subjunctive, not an imperative. However, according to Smalley, this clause gives “the fundamental *basis* of the imperative.” Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*: WBC series (Waco: Word, 1984), 237.

⁴ The formula “love one another” occurs five times in this epistle (3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12). The words “one another” mean *one another of the same kind*.

⁵ The word *agape* is used only once outside of the Bible in extra biblical Greek. This is amazing since we have at least 1,000 times the number of extra biblical Greek writings than we do the Scriptures. This validates the notion that *agape* love was indeed a supernatural kind of love.

⁶ This is the third of three expressions in John’s writings that help us understand the nature of God: “God is spirit” (John 4:24); “God is light” (1 John 1:5); and “God is love.” None of these is a complete revelation of God, of course, and it is wrong to separate them. But it can be helpful to bear these in mind. Regarding the statement God is love, Leon Morris writes, “This means more than God is loving; it means that love is the essence of his being. God loves—but not in an incidental or haphazard fashion. He loves because it is his nature to love, because it is his nature to give himself unceasingly in love.” Leon Morris, *Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 136.

⁷ The perfect tense of the words “is born” (*gegenmetai*) means that from the point we received new birth, God makes our spiritual birth permanent. The person born spiritually (with lasting effect, not again and again) has a lasting and permanent relationship that goes on forever with the Lord.

⁸ Several scholars note that the chiasmus of 4:7–8 is incomplete. E.g., Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John*: Anchor Bible series (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1982), 548; Michael Eaton, *1.2.3 John*: Focus on the Bible (Scotland: Christian Focus, 1996), 143–144.

⁹ In 1 John 2:3–11, John used the word “know” (*ginosko*) in the sense of intimacy with God. Here he comes back to the same thought. A person can be born of God but quenching the Spirit. He could be walking in darkness. If so, he is quenching the Spirit, not walking with the Spirit, and therefore not enjoying the fruit of the Spirit like love and joy. If this is true of him, we can certainly say he is not close/intimate with God. He does not know God in this intimate sense.

¹⁰ Sam Gordon, *Living in the Light*: 1.2.3 John (Greenville, SC: Trans World Radio, 2001), 157.

¹¹ Shakespeare once said, “They do not truly love who do not show their love.”

¹² This is the only place in John’s epistles where he uses the phrase “only begotten.” Yet, John does use the term *monogenes* (“only begotten”) in his gospel (1:14; 3:16). The words “only begotten” pertain to what is unique in the sense of being the only one of the same kind or class—unique. The Son is the one of a kind. Isaac was another “only begotten son” (see Heb 11:17). Even though Abraham had another son (Ishmael), Abraham’s only begotten son was Isaac because he was the one through whom the promised blessing was going to come. Isaac was a type of Christ.

¹³ The “if” (*ei*) in the Greek assumes that John’s readers agreed with the reality of God’s love for them. This “if” or better, “since” refers back to 4:10.

¹⁴ John uses the same Greek word *opheilomen* that he uses in 1 John 3:16; 4:11; and 3 John 8. In each case the idea of “owing a debt” is present. Although God’s love for us is completely unconditional, we ought to live for Him, since He died for us.

¹⁵ No one can see God since God is a spirit (see John 1:18; 4:24; 5:37; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16).

¹⁶ The theological term for this is “theophanies” (see Gen 18:1–22; Exod 33:18–23; Num 12:8; Isa 6:1–12; et al.). It seems clear from these passages that what these people saw was not the actual essence of God, but rather a visual representation of God’s glory. Even when Moses asked to see God’s glory, it was only a likeness of God which Moses saw, not the very essence of God. In Num 12:8, the Hebrew word *temunah* is used, which means “form or likeness.” Although there are numerous *apparent* Bible contradictions, upon closer examination, there are none that stand as contradictory. When the Lord says in Exod 33:20, “no man shall see me and live,” that’s what He means!

¹⁷ I like the way the NLT renders this verse: “No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love has been brought to full expression through us.”

¹⁸ Eaton, *1.2.3 John*, 153.

¹⁹ See BDAG, Electronic Ed.

²⁰ Francis Schaeffer said, “The love of God displayed in His people is the strongest apologetic that God has in the world.”

²¹ It is very difficult to discern where the section breaks in 1 John 4:7–21. I have chosen to break this text into two paragraphs. I am following the two primary breaks in the Greek text (UBS 4th ed). Two other commentators that I read follow this structure: I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*: NICNT Reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984). Marianne Meye Thompson, *1–3 John*: The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992).

²² The Greek text does not say “Holy Spirit”; it just says *pneuma* (“spirit”). It could be either “Spirit” or “spirit.” Of course it is only the Holy Spirit who can produce such perfect love in us, so the capitalized “Spirit” in our English versions is appropriate.

²³ Nothing happens apart from the Holy Spirit. Before salvation we were blinded by Satan (2 Cor 4:4), and we were in the dark (Eph 4:18). But as God drew us to Himself (John 6:44) and His light shined on our hearts (2 Cor 4:6) we came to call Jesus Lord through the Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). Therefore, the only way that we will be able to successfully love our fellow brothers and sisters is through the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

²⁴ The term “Savior” also appears only once in John’s Gospel (4:42). Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 John* (<http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1john.pdf>, 2006), 50.

²⁵ The word “confess” (*homologeō*) is used three other times in 1 John (1:9; 2:23; 4:3), and in each case, confession or the lack of, determines whether an individual is in an abiding relationship with God.

²⁶ Confessing that Jesus is God’s Son is not the only condition for abiding in God. It is one evidence that one is abiding. One not abiding may or may not make this confession. Confession is the last step, the step of bearing witness (cf. 1:9; 2:23; 4:3; Rom 10:9–10). Constable, *Notes on 1 John*, 51.

²⁷ “The stages in John’s thought at this point have now emerged clearly. Faith (acknowledging Jesus as God’s Son, v 15; and trusting in the love which God has for us, v 16a) leads to mutual indwelling between God and the believer. Such a personal relationship is consequently expressed in and perpetuated by ‘living in love’ (v 16b). The believer’s love, for God and for other people (or for God in other people, cf. v 12), is to be active and sustained.” Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 256.

²⁸ Here, John said God’s love reaches perfection “with us” (*meth hamon*), whereas in 4:12 he wrote that His love reaches perfection “in us” (*en hamin*). When it reaches perfection *in* us, a proper relationship to other people exists, namely, no hate. When it reaches perfection *with* us, a proper relationship to God exists, namely, no fear. As Jesus abode in His Father and consequently had confidence in the face of trials and death, so we can abide in Christ and have confidence in spite of the world’s hostility. Abiding in God gave Jesus confidence, and it gives us confidence too.

²⁹ John uses the word “confidence” or “boldness” (*parresia*) in 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; and 5:14. As in 2:28, there is a focus on our future state (“confident and unashamed before Him”). John is saying that loving Christians can even have boldness at the judgment seat of Christ when their Lord returns.

³⁰ John was using love for God and other people here, as he did elsewhere in this epistle (e.g., 2:3–11). He meant that it is the most important manifestation of a proper relationship with God, not the only manifestation.

³¹ Notice that John uses “brother” (*adelphos*) twice in this verse. His reference is to loving fellow Christians. He uses “brother” 12 times in this epistle. Both “brother” and “brethren” occur a total of 17 times in 1 John.

³² “You are a liar!” appears five times in five chapters. John could have easily added the word “hypocrite” to “liar.” The Greek word for hypocrite suggests one who is playacting—wearing a mask. It was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak out from large masks and impersonate or mime a character they were really not. Christians are hypocrites when they come to church, sing hymns, say amen, act spiritual and yet have not spoken to their brother or sister in weeks. That is a hypocrite!

³³ See 1 John 2:3; 3:23–24; 5:3. Here is another false claim (cf. 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9, 22; 5:10).

³⁴ Jesus Himself taught the two-fold commandment of loving both God and others (Matt 22:37–40; Mark 12: 29–31; John 13:34).