

**YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!**  
**Spring 2019 Leader Commentary**



**Unit 2: One or One Another**  
**Session 1: Love One Another (see pp. 124-127)**

**The Question:** Why should I love others?

**The Point:** We are to love others to the degree God loves us.

**Background Passage:** 1 John 4:7-21

**Focal Passage:** 1 John 4:7-12, 18-21

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, “Why should I love others?” and drive home this one truth: We are to love others to the degree God loves us.

**Focus on These Points**

***The Imperative to Love***  
**(1 John 4:7-8)**

John begins his treatise on love in verse 7 with an assumption that his readers should love one another and be committed to obeying God’s commandment to love others (see Lev. 19:9-18; Mark 12:31). The imperative to love is so urgent to John that he wasted no time in challenging the Ephesians to “love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God” (v. 7).

The phrase “love one another” occurs three times between verses 7-21. The present tense also indicates something that should be done continuously—a lifestyle, if you will. In other words, Paul is asking the members of the Christian community in Ephesus to love each other now, and that love should become a habitual practice.

The love John preaches is an action initiated by a volitional choice: John wants the Ephesians to choose to love one another just as God chose to sacrifice His Son, Jesus Christ, as an expression of His love for us. That type of love is only possible as we surrender to the Holy Spirit who enables us to love as Christ loved. It is patient and kind because it comes from God and is cultivated in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That love involves a consuming passion for the well-being of others and has its wellspring in God.

True believers of God are quickened by the Holy Spirit to love. Only those who do not know God are not prompted to love with the love of God. John is not saying that love is God. That would be a form of *pantheism* (the belief that God is everything and everyone and that everything is God). Instead, he underscores the point that love is an attribute that helps define God’s essential nature.

### ***The Illustration of Love (1 John 4:9-12)***

John is writing to a Christian community that is seemingly marginalized as members of a large pagan city. Ephesus was the center of pagan worship with a renowned temple to the goddess Artemis, which was considered one of the seven ancient wonders of the world. In fact, the apostle Paul was arrested at Ephesus for preaching against pagan worship of Artemis (Acts 19:25-34). John and Paul were concerned about the growing Christian community at Ephesus. The love John teaches is not only necessary for spiritual growth; it is also vital for the survival of that community. Therefore, that love must be genuine. At the beginning of verse 9, John says, "God's love was revealed among us." The ESV says "made manifest," and the NIV says "showed." In other words, God's love was made visible or brought to light among us when He "sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him" (v. 9).

God's love is revealed most completely in Jesus Christ through His incarnation, life, and sacrificial death. In this same way, our love for one another should be made visible for all to see. It should not be hidden, nor should it be self-centered. Our love for one another should give light to our regenerated nature as people who have been born again through the Holy Spirit. We should illustrate our commitment to love God by loving others sacrificially.

The phrase "atoning sacrifice," implies an offering made to a deity to avoid the wrath of the vengeful god. In the case of Jesus, however, love motivated the Father, not revenge. Jesus illustrates that love as He rescued us from the punishment we deserved by giving Himself as a sacrificial Lamb to atone for our sins.

John draws a parallel between the way God loves us in Jesus Christ and the way we should love one another. He insists that since God loved us while we were yet sinners and gave His Son for us, we are obligated to love one another unconditionally.

### ***The Implications of Love (1 John 4:18-21)***

Perfect love drives out fear and gives hope. Without love, our faith is counterfeit and our witness is hollow. God's love for us is demonstrated through every act of random kindness we do for one another. Through our service for the needy, our compassion for the lowly, and our benevolence to the poor, His love is demonstrated. For as long as we abide in God, His love will remain in us.

Because of the love of the Father that is illustrated through the Son, we can have confidence in the day of judgment. John closes out the passage on love by making an emphatic statement about why we should love: "We love because he first loved us" (v. 19). The "we" represents all those who believe in the lordship of Christ. To say we love God and yet hate our brothers and sisters makes us liars and imposters (v. 20), for how can we love the God we cannot see and refuse to love His children that we do see and with whom we are called to live in fellowship?

Love has many implications for our Christian witness. People will only know we are disciples of Jesus by the way we love. Where love is absent, hope dies, and fear abounds. Because of love, we have confidence that we will reign with Christ forevermore.