

The Life of Fellowship

Studies on 1 John

4. Love (1)



Teacher's notes and answers

Introduction

How do we know if someone truly is a child of God? We have discovered that there are three things that the Apostle John says in his letter.

- i. We will obey God's commands
- ii. We will love our brothers and sisters
- iii. We will have faith in Jesus Christ

These three themes are interwoven throughout 1 John. In this study we will look at the second theme, which is love. Love is the center of our relationship and fellowship with God, and if we love God then we will love one another. Let's see what John, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', has to teach us about real love.

1. COMMAND TO LOVE

1 John 4:7-12

There is a story of how John, as an old man, was carried into church every Sunday, and when asked to speak, he always repeated the same words, "Little children love one another". God never gives us a command without telling us why.

- * So why are we told to love one another? There are six reasons. See 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 12, 19.

(The six reasons are:

- i. Love is of God*
- ii. God is love*
- iii. God loves us*
- iv. God will abide in us*
- v. His love will be perfected in us*
- vi. He first loved us)*

- * If we love one another what does it prove? See v7 and 12.

(It proves we are born of God and know him. Also that God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.)

- * On the other hand if we do not love one another what does it show? Also see 1 John 2:9, 11, 4:20

(It shows we are walking in the darkness still and do not really know God.)

2. CONTRAST OF LOVE AND HATE

1 John 3:11-18

An example of love and hate is seen in these verses in the life of Cain and Abel.

- * Why did Cain murder his brother Abel? V12

(Because his deeds were evil and his brothers' were good.)



Discuss

Cain is an illustration of what the world is like. Why do people in the world hate us? Have you experienced this? Share a situation you have faced like this. See v12 and John 15:19, 17:14.

(The world hates us because we are not of this world and we no longer want to do the things they do.)

- * Hate is of this world and comes from the evil one, resulting in death. What does John say hatred is? v12
(Hatred is murder.)
- * Compare the difference between love and hate in verses 15 and 16.
(Hatred destroys life in others, while love is giving our life for others.)



Discuss

What does this love that John speaks about really mean? 1 John 3:16-18, 4:9-10 Why do we find it so difficult to love like this? How is it possible?
(This love was demonstrated when Jesus laid down his life for us. Real love is giving of our lives for others. Just as Jesus laid down his life, we will need to lay aside our selfishness and pride, to truly love others.)



Discuss

Some Christians think that it is dishonest to 'show' love when they don't feel it. What do you think about that?
(Real love is not based on our feelings, but it is something we demonstrate in action. We choose to love, so if we do not love we are not living up to God's standards.)

Conclusion

The word love is used freely today. However God's love is very different, and it is only as we look at what Jesus has done for us on the cross that we begin to understand what John meant by love in his letter. Love is not simply a feeling, but it is something we demonstrate in our lives.

Some people say, "Well I love everyone!" It is not possible for us to do that. As CS Lewis once said, "Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for not loving anybody in particular!" Is there someone who has hurt you? Start loving that person by forgiving them. Love is a choice, so choose love.

