**Lesson 10: God Is Love**

1 John 4:7-8

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

The major theme of the book of 1 John is love. In its various forms, the word “love” is used about fifty times in these five short chapters! 1 John 4:8 teaches us that God is love. In Him, we derive the perfect definition of love. It is, thus, impossible to truly know or practice love apart from God because anyone who loves in truth must exercise that love in Him. In this way, the love of this world falls short of God’s perfect love.

Before God communicated and demonstrated His love for His creation, He enjoyed a perfect love relationship in Himself. In John 17:24, Jesus prays to the Father appealing to the love the Father had for the Son from before the foundation of the world. That love was expressed from eternity past and continues today (cf. John 3:35). This perfect divine love is reciprocated by the Son to the Father as well (cf. John 14:31).

God's love is not a distant reality but personal. He has communicated His love to us through His Word that we might know Him (and so we might know love). His instruction in the Bible is His love message to us. So our understanding of God's love increases with our understanding of the Bible. Some people argue that parts of the Bible are not very loving. But it is not a surprise that they would come to that conclusion. If we measure things according to our own standards of love, it is true that God may fall short of our expectations. But since God is love (i.e., the very definition and essence of love), if we are going to love in truth, our definition of love must stem from Him.

God not only communicated His love to us in His Word, but He also personally demonstrated true love by sending His Son. Romans 5:8 says, "But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (cf. John 3:16; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4-7; 1 John 4:10). This was the ultimate demonstration of love because a perfect God took on flesh and died for the sins of imperfect men. Jesus made it possible for us as sinners to be reconciled to God. As sinners, we were willful enemies of God living in rebellion against Him and His will for our lives, but through Jesus' death and resurrection, He brings us into the perfect love relationship that the Persons of the Trinity enjoy.

This is a point of the gospel that really magnifies God's grace. God poured out His love for us and showed us how much He loved us by providing a Savior in Christ. Jesus bore the punishment for our sins on the cross. He paid our debt in full so we wouldn't have to pay it. He died our death so we could live. This is the demonstration of love that the Bible speaks of in Romans 5:8.

As a result of God’s love for us, we are called to love one another. His love is not only our motivation but really what enables us to love in the first place (1 John 4:19). Just as Jesus gave Himself up in love for us, we are called to give ourselves for each other. True biblical love is a love of self-denial and self-sacrifice. It is the implementation of the choice to see others as more important than yourself and to seek their interests before your own (Phil. 2:3-4). This sort of love is only possible because God first loved us.

*Questions for Discussion*

1. What does it mean that “God is love” (1 John 4:8)? How do you reconcile this with passages in the Bible that seem harsh and unloving? Is the Bible ever really unloving?

2. How would you define love biblically (cf. John 15:13; 1 John 4:19; 1 Cor. 13:4-7)?

3. How is the cross of Christ a demonstration of the perfect love of God?

4. Did God create man because He was lacking in love and needed someone to love Him? What does the Bible teach about God’s perfect love in the Trinity (cf. John 17:24; John 14:31)?

5. In what ways are we as believers called to love others? What do the following passages teach about our exercise of love? Consider how difficult these passages are in application and how much we depend on the Lord to help us love the way we should.

a. 1 John 4:7-8.

b. Proverbs 17:17.

c. Proverbs 13:24.

d. Matthew 5:43-44.

e. Matthew 10:37.

f. John 13:34-35.

g. Galatians 5:13-14.

h. 1 Corinthians 16:14.

**The Love of God**

The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell,

It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell;

The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win:

His erring child He reconciled and pardoned from his sin.

*O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!*

*It shall forevermore endure – the saints’ and angels’ song.*

When years of time shall pass away and earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,

When men, who here refuse to pray, on rocks and hills and mountains call,

God’s love so sure shall still endure, all measureless and strong:

Redeeming grace to Adam’s race – the saints’ and angels’ song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made,

Were ev’ry stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade,

To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry,

Nor could the scroll contain the whole tho’ stretched from sky to sky.

*Thoughts for Application*

1. How does the world’s understanding of love contradict or oppose the Bible’s teaching about love?

2. Jesus calls His followers to love each other as He loved them (John 13:34). What does this mean?

3. How did you come to know the love of God in Christ? What people and/or circumstances did God use to save you from your sins?

4. In light of God’s love, in what ways do you give of yourself in love for others? For your spouse? For your children? For other members of the church? For your extended family? For your friends?

5. For love to be genuine, does it have to be spontaneous? Does it have be accompanied by strong emotional feelings? Is it any less loving to make a choice to love someone and then to act on that choice?