

***THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN TO THE CHURCH:***  
**16. “Assurance of Our Salvation: Experiencing His Agape Love!”**  
**I John 4:7 – 16**

**Introduction:**

This morning we return to our study of this incredible letter John the Apostle wrote to the churches of Asia Minor where he was living as he neared the end of his life. He was leading churches in rim of the Mediterranean Sea as he lived in Ephesus, Turkey on or around AD 100 to 102.

The context into which John writes is a group of churches that has just gone through a major conflict over who Jesus really was and what He came to the earth to do. The internal strife in the local churches got so intense that a group split from the churches and chose to follow new leaders. In this letter John is writing about who Jesus really is, in response to questions raised by a group of people who had once walked in fellowship with him and his churches.

The opponents he writes about in the letter were former leaders who turned on him, claimed they had superior knowledge to John, and called into question his authority to lead the church or speak about Jesus Christ! These leaders took many members with them and established new superior churches based on a heresy, a supposed higher revelation of Jesus than John had! These leaders were still trying to politically influence members to leave John and join them!

John wrote this letter with a deeply broken heart and love **to Protect the remaining Flock from the heresies**. John wrote to establish four things in the minds and hearts of his readers, four things he clearly stated in the body of the letter so there would be no miscommunication:

1. **He wrote the letter to reestablish the Christian Joy and deep Assurance of their Salvation they knew in the former days** when they began in the faith and their hearts were full of love and the joy of the Lord overflowed in their worship gatherings. I John 1:4 “*We are writing these things so that our joy will be complete.*” I John 5:13 “*I write this to you who believe in the Son of God so that you may know you have eternal life.*”
2. **He wrote the letter so the people will see Christian Character and Conduct are extremely important to the believers as we live out our faith.** It is important that we choose to turn away from sin, to confess it and repent of it, not to pretend it doesn’t exist. I John 2:1, 2 “*My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely. He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only ours but the sins of the world.*”
3. **He wrote to reestablish the hallmark Christian truth that we Love One Another deeply!** When we have experienced the agape/love of God flowing into our hearts and lives when the Holy Spirit comes to live in us, the demonstration of that love is that we love one another in our local body of believers! I John 4:11 – 13 “*Dear friends, since*

*God loved us so much, we surely ought to love each other. 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. And God has given us Spirit as a proof that we live in him and he in us.”*

4. **He wrote the letter to reemphasize the great importance of Christian Fellowship in the local body of believers.** The word we will see throughout the letter describing fellowship is the Greek word *koinonia*, a word that describes holding on to one another as in a marriage when a man and woman hold on to one another in deep love for one another. I John 1:3 *“We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you can have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”*

What John writes to his remaining followers is such a passionate plea, such a straight word about these false teachers and what they believed about Jesus. **The thing that really grieved John was that they were people he had deeply loved, patiently invested in, and placed in positions of leadership in the body to help him lead the people to know Jesus better.** Now he had to write to his followers about these people who once were in his inner circle and were now his opponents who called him into question.

Here is what had John so hot under his tunic. These false teachers called Gnostics were attacking the very foundation of the faith of the believers in Jesus Christ. They were attacking the truth that Jesus Christ was incarnated God, that He had two natures in Him: **The Divine Nature and the Human Nature.** When that false teaching was spoken to the Christians under John’s pastoral care, he could see that it undermined four basic truths of the faith, causing people to believe four really grievous errors:

1. To deny Jesus is the God Man is to deny that Jesus can and must be our **Perfect Example.**
2. To deny Jesus is the God man is to deny that Jesus can be and if fact is our **Great High Priest.**
3. To deny Jesus is the God Man is to deny that Jesus is in fact our **Savior** and **Redeemer**, who alone has the power to save us!
4. To deny Jesus is the God Man is to deny that there can ever be **any genuine relationship or fellowship between Human Beings and the Father God!**

**This is precisely what False Prophecy Is and Does:** It is the spoken spirit of error, and it is always about turning the followers of Jesus Christ away from the truth of God that is in Christ Jesus. As an illustration consider the work of Elymas the sorcerer, who was a false prophet called Bar-Jesus in the court of Sergius Paulus on Crete. Luke writes of his actions, Acts 13:8b *“He was trying to turn the governor away from the Christian faith.”*

John wrote his followers imploring them to test the spirits, the origins behind the teaching of the false prophets, Gnostic teachers, as we saw two weeks ago: I John 4:1 – 3 *“Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. This is the way to find out if they have the Spirit of God: If a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ became a human being, that person has the Spirit of God. If a prophet does not acknowledge Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person is the Antichrist. You have heard that he is going to come into the world, and he is already here.”*

## **I. Known By the Agape Love of God Living In Us:**

I John 4:7 – 13

As *the Spirit of truth* is known by doctrine (and by what is doctrinally true the spirits are to be tried), it is also known by the holy, self-emptying other-oriented love of Heaven living in our hearts. So, John writes a fervent exhortation to holy Christian love: “*Dear friends, let us continue to love one another,*” 1 John 4:7. The apostle would unite them in God’s love so that he might unite them in love to each other: “Dear friends, I implore you, by the love I have for you all, that you demonstrate the fact that the love of God has taken up residence in you!”

This exhortation is pressed and urged with variety of ways as John unpacks our need to love one another deeply with the love of God that has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit:

**Truth Bomb #1.** The origin of the love of God in heaven and its descent to the human arena in Jesus: “*For love is of God.*” He is the author, parent, and commander of love; it completely fulfills His law and His gospel: “*And every one that loves is born of God,*” I John 4:7. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of agape love. The new divine nature dwelling in the children of God is the fruit of his love, and nature of God is His holy love of Heaven invading you and me. “*The fruit of the Spirit is love,*” Galatians 5:22. **Agape love comes down from heaven.**

**Truth Bomb #2. The Love of God dwelling in our lives, shows us we have truly Understood and Laid Hold of the divine nature:** “*Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*” I John 4:8. What God is in the very essence of His being, His nature, and emanates to the entire world is His communicated goodness, His love! His will and works are primarily love. Not that this is the only aspect of His nature Scripture speaks to and we should apprehend of God’s nature.

There are a number of “God is” statements in Scripture: 1. We learned earlier in this study: “**God is light,**” in I John 1:5. We learn that there is no darkness in God’s nature at all. He is the fullness of glorious light! 2. John tells us in John 4:24 that “**God is spirit,** and those who worship Him must do so in spirit and truth.” 3. We learn from Hebrews 12:29 that “Let us be thankful and worship God with holy fear and awe, for our **God is a consuming fire.**” And 4. Paul reminds us that “**God is just**” in His dealings with us as people, II Thessalonians 1:6.

God is principally love and is moved by love to reach to others. This is clearly seen in the demonstration of His magnificent love by our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ it:

1. **That the Lord God loved us, Just as We Were:** “*God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world.*” I John 4:9, God reached to us human beings He created while we were still living as ungrateful rebels. “*God demonstrates his love towards us, in this, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,*” Romans 5:8. Doesn’t it move your heart to think that that God would love impure, vain, vile, and lost people like you and I once were!

2. **That he has loved us so much that we are considered to be Precious in His Sight, to such an extent that He has given for us His own, only-begotten dearly loved, blessed Son Jesus**

**for us:** “God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him.” 1 John 4:9. This person Jesus is the Holy and Anointed One, the Son of God; he is the only-begotten. If we see Jesus as a creature or created being, he is not the only-begotten. If Jesus in any way diminishes the Father’s glory or glorious essence, or substance, He is not the only-begotten. **But the mystery and miracle of divine love is that such a Divine Human Son was sent into our world for us because God loved us with Heaven’s love!**

3. **That God loved us first, even in the circumstances in which we Found ourselves Outside of Christ Jesus:** “This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.” He loved us, when we had no love for him, when we languished in our guilt, misery, and iniquities, even when we were undeserving, defiled, polluted, and unclean, and needed so desperately to be washed from our sins in His precious blood.

4. **That he gave us his Son Jesus that through Him we may engage in right Relationship with God the Father, by the Holy Spirit,** and that we might be walking through life right now fully aware that we have been given eternal life through Him. Jesus bears away from us our sins, guilt and shame. Jesus gives us the joy of real life, abundant life now and prepares us to live forever with Him in eternity as we walk with Him by faith! “This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.”

**Truth Bomb #3. Divine Love for our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus should constrain us to love one another deeply too:** “Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each another.” John’s point is nondebatable! The example of God the Father, Son, and Spirit should convince us and motivate us to love each other deeply from the heart. **If God loves my Christian brother or sister, then I must love them too! People who are loved by the Father God should be loved by you and me too! Can we refuse to love those whom the eternal God loves?** We should be admirers of his love, lovers of his love, and consequently lovers of those whom he loves.

Ephesians 5:1, 2 “Follow God’s example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life of love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave Himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to Him.”

**Truth Bomb #4. The Christian living in the agape love of God is an Assurance of the Divine Habitation in you and me:** *But if we love each other, God lives in us,*” I John 4:12. Now God is living in us, not by any visible presence, or immediate appearance to the eye, but by his Spirit. I John 4:12, 13 “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. And God has given us His Spirit as proof that we live in him and he is us.”

The Lord God simply asks you and me to permit the flow of the agape love of Heaven to motivate us in everything we think, desire, long for in life, what we say and what we do. Let the love of God permeate your heart and life deeply. And most precious, let us love one another

deeply from the heart as He has chosen to love us and demonstrated that love to us all by what Jesus His Son did for us!

Specifically, God asks us to love each other in the Church Jesus died to create! In the believers we rub shoulders with, we are to see the footprints of the Holy Spirit's working in and through them and love them too. When we do, we demonstrate for all to see the Lord God dwells in us and we in Him.

**Truth Bomb #5. Divine love poured out into our hearts attains an amazing Perfection or Completion in us:** *“And his love has been brought to full expression through us.”* I John 4:12b It has been brought to perfection in us. God's love is not perfected in him alone because it is holy, self-emptying, and other-oriented. It is perfected in us and through us to one another. When the divine love has brought us into fellowship with the Spirit each day, it can be said the agape love we feel and exhibit toward each other in the body of Christ is being perfected, completed. Though this love of ours is not at present perfect, His love in us works to perfect us!

**Truth Bomb #6.** When we demonstrate His holy love toward one another in our church family, His love is perfecting us together! **Now John adds the amazing relational aspect of the assurance of our salvation we have in and through Jesus Christ our Lord.** When the love of Heaven is flowing into and out of us, we can see the footprints of His Spirit's holy presence living in us, inhabiting us and motivating us to love! I John 4:13 *“And God has given us His Spirit as proof that we live in him and he is us.”*

## **II. It All Centers in Jesus Christ our Lord:**

I John 4:14 – 16 *“Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. All who proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. We know how much God loves us and we have put our trust in him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God and God in him.”*

Since faith in Christ moves us to love God and love for God moves love to the believers in His Church on earth, John points us to the things that are absolutely essential to walking through life in the Christian faith as the foundation of the holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love of God. John states the fundamental truth of the Christian faith, which is so representative of the love of God: *“Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.”*

We see the Lord Jesus' relation to God; he is Son to the Father as no one else is, and so as to be the One True God with the Father. We see the Lord Jesus in His role as our Savior and Redeemer, *“the Savior of the world.”* he saves us by his death, example, intercession, Spirit, and power against the enemies of our salvation. We see the truth that Jesus was sent from Heaven on mission from the Father. *“The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”*

The Father decreed and willed that Jesus come for us and Jesus consented to the will of the Father. We see John's testimony to the evidence: *“We have seen and do testify.”* The call of God is to testify it; the salvation of the world depends on the truth of who Jesus is and why He came

to earth. I John 4:15 *“All who proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.”*

This confession of the truth as it is in Jesus includes faith in the heart as the foundation of it, acknowledgment with the mouth to the glory of God and Christ, and profession in the life and conduct, in opposition to the will and ways of the world system we live in. John says the one who confesses Christ, and that He is the Son of God, is inhabited by the Spirit of God.

John applies this testimony to his readers in order to stir up holy love. God’s love is seen and exerted in Christ Jesus; *“We know how much God loves us and we have put our trust in him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God and God in him.”* Christian revelation is the revelation of the divine love; the truths of our faith are truths relating to the divine love; all his transactions in and with his Son reveal His love to us, and means to advance us to the love of God: *“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”* II Corinthians 5:19

I John 4:16b *“God is love, and all who live in love live in God and God in him.”* Beloved ones, this has been one of the most misunderstood and misquoted verses in the entire New Testament. The secular mind reads that and takes it at face value: God is love, so what I feel for a member of the opposite gender, what I feel for my sons, daughters, and grandchildren is actually the expression of God flowing through me to those people!

That is not what John writes in this text! What John writes is God is agape love and agape love has its origins in the very heart, the nature, and the character of God the Father, Son, and Spirit! God is in His essential nature holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love. That statement radically changes what John is writing here.

**It explains the Creation.** God is holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love is why God created the world and put human beings in it. If God is this kind of holy love, it cannot exist alone, or in isolation. This kind of love must have someone to love and someone to love it!

**It explains Free-Will.** Unless agape love is free responding to it is not love it is coercion. When God created human beings, He had to make it possible for them to experience His love and that meant they had to be able to accept or reject it! So, love is a free response of our heart to receive and give to God our love.

**It explains Redemption.** If God had been only law and justice and not holy love, He would have left us in our sins and guilt and shame with no hope of extricating ourselves from what we had done to ourselves through sinning! His law states the soul who sins shall die. But in Jesus we see the love of God motivating Him to come and die for us, to give us the opportunity to be redeemed from the curse of the law!

**It explains the Life Beyond this Life.** If God was merely a Creator we would have been born and died and would have been little better than the flowers of the field. We live, we die, and our place remembers us no more. But the fact of God’s incredible love for us in Jesus Christ says this human life is not all there is and we have an opportunity to know God, love God, and live forever with God!

**“THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN TO THE CHURCH:**

16. “Assurance of Salvation: Experiencing His Love!”

I John 4:7 – 16

**Introduction:**

We are in a study of the letter of I John to the churches of Asia Minor, written about AD 100 as John neared the end of his life on earth.

John was writing to a group of churches he deeply loved that had walked through an awful church split led by former leaders who had turned on him and John is trying to **P**\_\_\_\_\_ the **F**\_\_\_\_\_!

John wrote this letter with a deeply broken heart to establish four things in the minds and hearts of his readers!

1. He wrote the letter to reestablish Christian **J**\_\_\_\_\_ and **A**\_\_\_\_\_ of their salvation they knew in former days.
2. He wrote the letter so people will see Christian **C**\_\_\_\_\_ and **C**\_\_\_\_\_ are extremely important as we live our faith.
3. He wrote the letter to reestablish the hallmark Christian truth that we are called to **L**\_\_\_\_\_ **O**\_\_\_\_\_ **A**\_\_\_\_\_ deeply!
4. He wrote to reemphasize the importance of Christian **F**\_\_\_\_\_ in the local body of believers.

The thing that grieved John was that people who once helped him were now denying the very truths the Gospel message is founded upon, Jesus is the Son of Man and Son of God our only Savior!

To deny these basic truths is to make four grievous errors about our Christian faith: To deny Jesus is the God Man is to deny that ...

1. Jesus is our **P**\_\_\_\_\_ **E**\_\_\_\_\_
2. Jesus is our **G**\_\_\_\_\_ **H**\_\_\_\_\_ **P**\_\_\_\_\_
3. Jesus is our **S**\_\_\_\_\_ and **R**\_\_\_\_\_
4. Jesus is our only means of genuine **F**\_\_\_\_\_ with God

This is exactly what **F**\_\_\_\_\_ **P**\_\_\_\_\_ is and does. So, John calls his readers to test the spirits behind the message. I John 4:1 – 3

**I. Known by the Agape Love of God Living in Us:** I John 4:7 – 13

The Spirit of truth is known and understood in two clearly understandable ways: It is tested with **D**\_\_\_\_\_ truth and is tested by whether or not we can see the **A**\_\_\_\_\_ /**L**\_\_\_\_\_ of God in the speakers.

There are six amazing major truths of God in these paragraphs of I John 4:

**Truth Bomb #1.** The **O**\_\_\_\_\_ of this love is the God of Heaven.

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**Truth Bomb #2.** The love of God dwelling in our hearts shows us we have U \_\_\_\_\_, L \_\_\_\_\_  
H \_\_\_\_\_ of His divine nature.

There are four different “God is” statements in the Scriptures: L \_\_\_\_\_ ... S \_\_\_\_\_ ... J \_\_\_\_\_ ... a  
C \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_. The love of God is seen in the magnificent acts of our Lord Jesus on our  
behalf:

1. He loved us J \_\_\_\_\_ as we W \_\_\_\_\_.
2. He loved us so much He considered us to be P \_\_\_\_\_ in His sight.
3. He loved us F \_\_\_\_\_, long before we ever cared.
4. He loved us so much He enabled us to engage Him in R \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Truth Bomb #3.** The love of God for Christians should C \_\_\_\_\_ us to love them too.

**Truth Bomb #4.** The love of God dwelling in you and me, by His Spirit is an A \_\_\_\_\_ of our  
salvation.

**Truth Bomb #5.** His love in us is being brought to C \_\_\_\_\_ .

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**Truth Bomb #6.** His love in us points to our relationship with the Father because He has given us His Spirit’s  
presence to abide in us.

## **II. It All Centers in Jesus Christ our Lord: I John 4:14 – 16**

John testifies to the things that are absolutely essential to you and me knowing we have eternal life in Jesus  
Christ. I John 4:15

The confession of this truth includes O F \_\_\_\_\_ as foundational to what we confess as truth.

Christian revelation is the revelation of the love of God to us: II Cor. 5:19

I John 4:16b is one of the most misunderstood and often misquoted texts in the entire New Testament, “God  
is love.” John doesn’t have a human definition in his mind as he writes. His term is God is agape and that  
changes everything:

It explains C \_\_\_\_\_

It explains F \_\_\_\_\_ -W \_\_\_\_\_

It explains R \_\_\_\_\_

It explains the L \_\_\_\_\_ after this L \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

- 1. John wrote about the four main themes in his letter: what are they and why are they important for the followers of Jesus today?**
- 2. The Gnostics taught their followers things about Jesus that were completely false. What did they teach about Jesus and what heretical things resulted from their false teachings?**
- 3. If we deny the incarnation of Jesus Christ what are the four errors that we have immediately given room for in our thinking?**
- 4. John writes powerful truths in the paragraph I John 4:7 – 13, as he writes about the holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love of God dwelling in us. Of the six major truths, which one or ones grabbed your heart?**
- 5. There are four words about how we grasp the nature of God when He fills us with His holy love of Heaven. Which one or ones of the four truths touched you deeply? Why?**
- 6. Truth bomb #4 is the agape love dwelling in our hearts is the assurance of divine habitation in our lives. Why is that so?**
- 7. What do the words “God is love” really mean? How would you explain to someone who is not yet born of God what the love of Heaven dwelling in the human heart is and does?**
- 8. Read together aloud I Corinthians 13:4 – 13 and discuss insights you have about the Spirit’s work in pouring the love of God into our hearts.**
- 9. Read together aloud Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian believers in Ephesians 4:14 – 21 and discuss insights you have regarding the love of Heaven invading the lives of God’s sons and daughters.**
- 10. Do you know for certain, with confident assurance that you have been invaded by the love of God? How do you know His love has flowed into your life? What is the evidence you see?**