

## A Perfected Love

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Certainty: Absolute Truths that Produce Joyful Assurance / Love / 1 John 4:7-12

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A group of professionals posed the following question to a group of four- to eight-year-olds: “What does love mean?” The answers they got, as one researcher said, “were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined.”

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- “Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your french fries without making them give you any of theirs.” Chrissy—age 6
  - “Love is what makes you smile when you’re tired.” Terri—age 4
  - “Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is okay.” Danny—age 7
  - “Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day.” Noelle—age 7
  - “Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day.” May Ann—age 4
  - “When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.” Karen—age 7
  - “When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn’t bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That’s love.” Rebecca—age 8

Mother’s Day causes a variety of different sentiments within people. For some, Mother’s Day is a day for you to feel **special** because of the increased honor you will receive. For others, Mother’s Day represents a day of **grieving or loneliness** because of the loss of a child. Others feel **awkward** on Mother’s Day because they have no children, though they have attempted to have children. Still, for others, Mother’s Day is personally **irrelevant** because they have no desire to be a mother or in some cases, they will never be mothers. Finally, there are those who **detest** Mother’s Day because their mother was either absent or not worthy of any honor at all.

There are a wide range of potential sentiments about Mother's Day, but the gospel does have a way of speaking to all of us regardless of our sentiment. To those who are mothers, I want to challenge you to consider a question. If you are a Christian, what makes your motherhood distinct from those who are not Christian? If you are a grieving mother, how can Mother's Day be turned from mourning to joy? If you feel awkward because you have no children, how can awkwardness be turned into confidence on Mother's Day? If you find this day to be irrelevant (teen, man, child...etc.), is there a truth that you should care about today? If you detest days like today, how can that bitterness be turned to joy? If you are NOT a true follower of Jesus Christ, what is offered to you here that you cannot find anywhere else?

Our current passage is nestled in an ongoing study of the letter of I John. It is a passage written to a body of believers which would have included a diversity of believers, including women. As a matter of fact, **biblical Christianity gives honor to the distinct place of women.** Even though women or mothers are not mentioned, it is a passage that included a message to all of the believers of the church who had been rattled by false teachers who'd left the body but were still influencing the church. Notice [I John 4:7](#).

**1 John 4:7 KJV 1900**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

It is here where we can see a connection that is relevant for all of us today. The connection here is the "love of God." Often, on Mother's Day there is much talk of "a mother's love." Sometimes we hear or make the statement that "there is nothing like a mother's love." **John is going to present a truth that will confront our idea of a mother's love being the highest virtue. In [I John 4:12](#), this is a perfected love:**

**1 John 4:12 KJV 1900**

<sup>12</sup> No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

- › **Indeed, only one love can be our eternal source of absolute certainty! All other ideas, concepts must be vetted by this one love.** We do not know anything of a mother's love unless we first know the highest and greatest love — that is the love of God.

# The Emergence of this Perfected Love ([1 John 4:7](#))

**1 John 4:7 KJV 1900**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

## (a) The impassioned command - *Beloved, let us love one another*

John models the “one another” love in his address and tones. Believers who have been changed by the love of God should increasingly model not just the activity, but also the language which communicates this kind of love.

Language is a big controversy in our current culture and context because language is perceived as a power struggle. Here, we see John actually using language that is humble (in that he is submissive to the command of the Lord — old and new command). John is not grasping for power by canceling certain language or by slandering, but rather he is manifesting a Christlike love in his language.

“*Let love*” is a present, active verb - this means that this love is to continue in an ongoing way. The object of love is “one another.” One of the reasons this should matter to non-believers is because when you see Christians in community together, you are not looking at people who are perfect but people who are striving towards this command in an ongoing way. For believers, this is an indictment against stagnant Christian living. In the current context of our culture, love (as we typically see it) can be cut off abruptly without notice.

## (b) The implicit cause for the command - *for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

Why put both of these statements here? There may be some confusion. To be born of God certainly means that one has believed on Jesus Christ as Lord

and Savior, but we often overlook that **to be born of God is to be in an ongoing relationship with God.**

**The new birth does not come separate from “knowing” God.** For someone who knows God, they have been born again. For someone who has been born again, they know God in an ongoing way (knoweth - present, active, indicative...). This also means that anyone who actively knows **God will actively be growing in love, not because they have experienced that love ONLY, but because they ARE experiencing that love continuously.**

This helps us to be skeptical of categories that we have created for people we interact with — people we love, people who have said they have been born of God.

- i. **Still-Born Christianity:** Some have created a category for people who say they have been born again, but who are not actively growing in knowing God.
- ii. **Monastic Christianity:** Some have created a category for people who say they have been born again, but they are intentionally avoiding other Christians in the church — manifesting an evident lack of love.
- iii. **Selfish Christianity:** Some have created a category for people who say they have been born again, but who are growing in love for self with no apparent concern for the body.
- iv. **Conditional Love Christianity:** Some have created a category for people who say they have been born again, but who only give love when it is in their interest or when it is payback for love shown to them.

**(b.1) The implicit cause stated negatively - *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love* - [1 John 4:8](#)**

**1 John 4:8 KJV 1900**

<sup>8</sup> He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

The first verb “loveth” is present active showing a process, developing...etc., but “knoweth not God” is in the aorist tense meaning that it is a snapshot of something done. **This person has NEVER known God.** Why? Because if they

would have entered into relationship with God, they would have entered into relationship with Love.

- › The security we have when we are loved is as strong and enduring as the Lover. God is the Lover because God is Love.

Because he is the origin of this love, because he is eternal, He can offer a security that even a mother's love cannot fully offer.

- › Kid's Pause – Perfect love comes from God because that is who God is.

Love is from God the way heat is from fire, or the way light is from the sun. Love belongs to God's nature. It's woven into what he is. It's part of what it means to be God. The sun gives light because it is light. And fire gives heat because it is heat. So John's point is that in the new birth, this aspect of the divine nature becomes part of who you are.<sup>1</sup>

The Source, the emergence of this love is God himself. There is no other place to obtain this love. It is not any idea of motherhood, fatherhood, teenhood, or adulthood. It is not a love that is possible apart from this God.

## The Extent of this Perfected Love ([1 John 4:9-10](#))

How can we be sure that this love is real, true, and Sourced in God alone?

### (a) Real Evidence of the Extent of God's Love ([1 John 4:9](#))

#### **1 John 4:9 KJV 1900**

<sup>9</sup> In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

God's love has been materially, physically manifested in that (1) he sent his only Son (unique) into the world:

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<sup>1</sup> Akin, Dr. Daniel L. Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

**John 1:14 KJV 1900**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

**John 1:18 KJV 1900**

<sup>18</sup> No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Contextually, this would fly in the face of the false teachers. The implication of John's argument is that apart from the incarnation, we really don't have reason to know God/know love or what it looks like perfectly. Left to ourselves, we might describe perfect love in many different ways - **connected to this thought is that the reason God sent his son was so that we might love through him.** There is no life apart from Jesus, and this also hints at the substitution of Jesus. Through the death of Jesus, we have life.

## (b) Real Efficacy [*ability to produce intended result*] of the Extent of God's Love ([1 John 4:10](#))

**1 John 4:10 KJV 1900**

<sup>10</sup> Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Verse 10 is further elaboration on the sending of God's Son. John makes clear that this is not about our love for God, but rather how God made his love clear. **Jesus was sent as the ATONEMENT for our sins.** Several truths are packed into this one statement:

*The atonement is the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation.* – Grudem <sup>2</sup>

The love of God is seen as the cause for the Atonement:

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<sup>2</sup> Grudem, W. A. (2004). Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine (p. 568). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

**Romans 3:25 KJV 1900**

<sup>25</sup> Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

In this section we consider two aspects of Christ's work: (1) *Christ's obedience for us*, in which he obeyed the requirements of the law in our place and was perfectly obedient to the will of God the Father as our representative, and (2) *Christ's sufferings for us*, in which he took the penalty due for our sins and as a result died for our sins. <sup>3</sup>

Likewise, Tim Keller reminds us, "The gospel is that Jesus lived the life you should have lived and died the death you should have died, in your place, so God can receive you not for your record and sake but for his record and sake." ("Keller on Preaching to a Post-Modern City II") <sup>4</sup>

**Only one love is enough to give to us eternal life. It is the love of God in Jesus Christ.** Some of you have been abused by the love of mothers that are being celebrated today, but you do not need to be downcast for God has loved you with an everlasting love. God has given his Son as the payment for your sin.

› **Kid's Pause - The life and death of Jesus prove that God is love.**

The emergence of this perfected love is in God Himself. The extent of this perfected love is Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

## The Evidence of this Perfected Love ([1 John 4:11-12](#))

### (a) This Love Demands Action ([1 John 4:11](#))

**1 John 4:11 KJV 1900**

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

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<sup>3</sup> Grudem, W. A. (2004). Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine (p. 570). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

<sup>4</sup> Akin, Dr. Daniel L. Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

**If we have been loved, we must love.** Verse 11 is the moral consequence upon believers because of this great work of God.

## (b) Action Proves Relationship ([1 John 4:12](#))

**1 John 4:12 KJV 1900**

<sup>12</sup> No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

**The way people see God manifested is as we love as we have been loved.**

The great and challenging application to these commands is that we must go to those who don't want us there. We must share a gospel they don't want to hear. We must love those who may hate and even kill us in return.<sup>5</sup>

If we love, we manifest that God abides in us.

“Perfected” - **perfect** — *The verb tense used by the writer to describe a completed verbal action that occurred in the past but which produced a state of being or a result that exists in the present (in relation to the writer). The emphasis of the perfect is not the past action so much as it is as such but the present “state of affairs” resulting from the past action.*<sup>6</sup>

- › **Kid's Pause - People who have received God's love in Jesus, love others like God has loved them.**

If you are a Christian, what makes your motherhood distinct from those who are not Christian? A Christian mother does not pursue the ideal of motherhood so that she can feel good about herself. She believes the full love and acceptance she has in Christ, and this frees her to love motherhood (impact on anxiety, image, tones...etc.).

If you are a grieving mother, how can Mother's Day be turned from mourning to joy? You have a God who has known loss in that he gave his only Son. He feels

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<sup>5</sup> Akin, Dr. Daniel L. Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

<sup>6</sup> Heiser, M. S., & Setterholm, V. M. (2013; 2013). Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology. Lexham Press.



and empathizes with you in your loss. Rejoice in the Christ who has tasted death for you.

If you feel awkward because you have no children, how can awkwardness be turned into confidence on Mother's Day? The love of God expressed by the atoning death of Jesus Christ shows that you are as loved as anyone who has children. In Christ, you are a child of God and can bear much fruit to the glory of God.

If you find this day to be irrelevant (teen, man, child...etc.), is there a truth that you should care about today? The love of God in Christ frees you and enables you to selflessly love your family and NOT selfishly use them for yourself.

If you detest days like today, how can that bitterness be turned to joy? The love of God confirms that though you have been abused by people who are supposed to love you, **you have been supremely loved so that you can love supremely** — even your enemies.

If you are NOT a true follower of Jesus Christ, what is offered to you here that you cannot find anywhere else? The love of God is the only means through which you can be forgiven for your sin and given a perfect record with God. In Christ ALONE you find freedom from the rat race of the image of motherhood, the rat race of the image of the working mom, the rat race of the image of the successful businesswoman. In Christ, you are loved because of nothing you bring. You are loved, because He is love. Will you trust in Jesus Christ today?

- › God loves us **because of who he is**, has proven his love in the **sacrifice of Jesus Christ**, and has **equipped us** to love others as we have been loved **as proof** that we really know Him.