

## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

June 21, 2026

### Exploring the Nature of God

“God is Love”

1 John 4:7-21

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In the fall of 1937, Ed Keefer was a senior in the school of engineering at the University of Toledo in Ohio. His claim to fame is that he invented what was called the Cupidoscope. It promised to reveal, with scientific precision, if a couple was truly in love. As the inventors explained to a *United Press* reporter as news of their innovation spread, the Cupidoscope delivered on its promise of measuring the affection a college girl has for her boyfriend. Built in the school’s physics laboratory, the Cupidoscope was fashioned from an old radio cabinet, a motor spark coil, and an electrical resistor. To test their bond, a man and a woman would grip electrodes on either side of the Cupidoscope and move them toward one another until the woman felt a spark—not of attraction, but of electricity. The higher her tolerance for this mild electric shock, the more of a love signal the meter registered. A needle decorated with hearts purported to show her devotion on a scale that ranged from “No hope” to “See preacher!” It all sounds like a slightly painful party game—but the Cupidoscope was one experiment in a serious, decades-long quest to quantify love. This undertaking garnered the attention of leading scientists across the United States and in Europe in the early years of the 20th century, and it is memorialized most prominently in the penny arcade mainstay known as *the Love Tester*. How do we measure love? In order to measure love we have to first know what love is. How do we actually know what love is? We can only know what true love is through God who is not only the author of love; God is love itself. As we continue this sermon series on Exploring the Nature of God, we learn from the Bible that God is love, has shown us what His love looks like through Jesus and now invites us to show God’s love to the world.

#### 1 JOHN 4:7-21

***<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.***

***<sup>9</sup> God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. <sup>10</sup> This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.***

***11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. 12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.***

***13 And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. 14 Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. 16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.***

***God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. 17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.***

***18 Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. 19 We love each other because he loved us first.***

***20 If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? 21 And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.***

## **GOD IS LOVE**

At the heart of this passage in *1 John* is the statement that **God is Love**. In verses 8 and 16 the writer does not just say that God loves but takes it much farther when he says that God *is* love. To only say that God loves can imply that sometimes God loves and sometimes He doesn't. When we read God is love that means God is and always loves. Love originates from God; it is who God is. All love flows from God, the creator of love. Someone wrote in *Our Daily Bread*, "God and love are synonymous. Love is not an attribute of God, it *is* God; whatever God is, love is." Like the light comes from the sun, so also does God's love come from Him. It is interesting to note that only one word is used more in the Bible than "love" and that word is "life". "Life" and "love" are the two most common words in the Bible. Love is the central message of the entire Bible because it is at the very heart of God. There is not even one moment in all of history when God is not love.

Once, while riding in the country, a man saw on a farmer's barn a weathervane on the arrow of which was inscribed these words: "God is Love." The man turned in at the gate and asked the farmer, "What do you mean by that? Do you think that God's love is changeable; that it veers about as the arrow turns in the winds?" The farmer said, "Oh, no! I mean that whichever way the wind blows, God is still Love." Or as you may have heard it said before that "God is good all the time and all the time God is good!" You

could say that God is love all the time and all the time God is love. Everything God does is motivated out of God being love. In William Self's commentary entitled, *Feasting on the Word* he says, "Preachers in every age have had to deal with those who try to redefine the nature of God. Some say God is fear; others say that God is light; but the gospel says that God is love. All God's activity is loving activity. If God creates, God does it in love. If God rules, God does it in love. If God judges, God does it in love. God cannot help it – God *is* love."

### **GOD IS LOVE IN-PERSON**

We say that God is love and everything that He does flows out of that love, the question then we must ask is, what is God's love? How do we define God's love? What does God's love look like in action? We learn from *1 John* that **God is Love In-Person**. God didn't just send angels to introduce the world to God's love. God didn't just send a prophets to explain God's love. God didn't just give us a document straight from Him, called the Bible, to help us understand His love. In addition to all these, God Himself came in-person into this world through Jesus to personally give us His love. Jesus put it this way in *John 3:16-17*, "<sup>16</sup> *For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.* <sup>17</sup> *God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*" God didn't just tell us He loved us, He sent His Son to show us His love through Jesus becoming one of us and personally extending to us God's love.

In a video on YouTube, Pastor Tim Keller said, "Dorothy Sayers wrote a series of detective novels focused on her fictional character Lord Peter Wimsey. Sayers' creation Whimsey was an aristocrat detective from the 1930s who solved all kinds of crimes. She wrote a whole series of stories and novels about Lord Peter. Then about halfway through her Wimsey detective series, a woman suddenly shows up in the novels. Sayers' new character is named Harriet Vane, a female mystery writer and one of the very first women to get through Oxford. Harriet and Peter fall in love. Until that point in the series, Whimsey was an unhappy, broken bachelor, until Harriet Vane shows up and her love starts to heal his broken soul. It's interesting because the author Dorothy Sayers, like her fictional creation, was one of the first women to graduate from Oxford. Like Harriet Vane, Dorothy Sayers was a writer of mystery novels. Dorothy Sayers looked at her character, Lord Peter Wimsey, and saw that he needed someone to help him out. So, who did she put in there? A detective novelist, a woman, and one of the first women to go through Oxford. Who was that? She put herself into her own stories. She looked into the world that she had created, and she fell in love with the chief character, Peter Wimsey, and she wrote herself into that story so she could heal him." God created this world, yet we turned away from him and were damaged by our sin. But God looked into this world and he loved us so much that He wrote Himself into his own story. God though didn't just write Himself into a fiction story, the God who is love literally put Himself into history through Jesus Christ, to personally bring His perfect love to us with the hopes that we will accept that love and be healed by God's love.

I came across a blog from David Jeremiah this week that offers seven different characteristics of what God's love is and all of these characteristics are found perfectly in Jesus. First, he says that **1) God's Love Is Uncaused**. God doesn't love us because of anything in us, or anything we have done. God's love is totally uncaused. There is nothing we can do to cause God to love us or to stop loving us. John Ortberg once said, "Nothing you will ever do could make God love you more than He does right now: not greater achievement, not greater beauty, not wider recognition, not even greater levels of spirituality and obedience. Nothing you have ever done could make God love you any less: not any sin, not any failure, not any guilt, not any regret."

Secondly, **2) God's Love Is Unreasonable**. God loves with an unreasonable love, a love that doesn't need a reason to love or stop loving.

Thirdly, **3) God's Love Is Unending**. If God is love and God is eternal, God was, is, and always will be love. God's love in the past, present, and future never waiver. *Jeremiah 31:3 says, "Long ago the Lord said to Israel: 'I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.'"* God's love is eternal and never changes.

We learn fourthly, that **4) God's Love Is Unlimited**. There are no boundaries or limits to God's love.

Fifth, we learn that **5) God's Love Is Unchanging**. Human love is forever changing as it looks more like a rollercoaster. Since God never changes, God's love is always constant as it never changes. There is no such thing as a honeymoon period of love for God. God doesn't fall in or out of love.

The sixth characteristic of God's love is that **6) God's Love Is Uncomplicated**. As the familiar song that we sing says, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." It really is that simple.

The final characteristic of God's love is that **7) God's Love Is Unconditional**. The defining term used for God's love in the Bible is the Greek word, *agape*. When it is used in reference to God's love it brings out the meaning of being unconditional, sacrificial love that summarizes all seven of these characteristics of God's love as being without cause or condition, that leads God to love us with a love that is unending and does not love us "because of" but "in spite of."

I have shared this example with you before of God's unconditional love. It occurred on a weeknight after one of my son, Shawn's, Little League Baseball games. He was about 10-12 years old at the time. My wife and three daughters were doing something else that night, so it was just us guys together. After the game was over the two of us went to our favorite BBQ restaurant. While we were sitting there waiting for our food to be served, I was cherishing the time I got to spend with him and said to Shawn, "Shawn, you know I love you, don't you?" He said, "Yes!" Then I asked him, "Do you know why I love you?" He said, "Yeah, just because." He got it right. I loved him, as I do my girls

and now as I do all my grandchildren, “just because.” Which, by the way, Missy and I were blessed this last week with our ninth grandchild, a beautiful grandson, Edison James. My children and my grandchildren have done nothing to earn my love. They also can do absolutely nothing to weaken or strengthen my love for them. I love them just because they are my children. I have the same amount of love for every one of my children and my grandchildren. I love them with a love that I cannot put into words. When they came into this world, I was automatically filled with overflowing love for them and that love will never go away. They did not earn that love, nor can they ever lose that love. God loves every single one of us “just because” with absolutely no strings attached.

### ***GOD IS LOVE IN AND THROUGH US***

What is especially radical about God being love in human form in Jesus is that when we accept God’s love, we now experience one of the most amazing miracles ever and that is that ***God is Love in and through Us***. I love the words of *1 John 4:11-12*, “<sup>11</sup> *Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.* <sup>12</sup> *No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.*” If we have the God who is love living in us, and we are continually experiencing God’s love we then have within us an infinite reservoir of God’s love out of which we are now to love everyone in this hurting and broken world. God continually is pouring out His love in our hearts to not only love us but to use us to share a full expression of His love with this world. The first part of *1 John 4:17* says, “*And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.*” The more we experience God’s love and the closer we walk with God the more perfect our love grows.

Our love grows more perfect when we love as Jesus loved. The Apostle Paul put it this way in *Ephesians 5:2*, “*Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*” We are loving like Jesus when we live a life of self-sacrificing love. Jay Kesler, wrote, “Jesus-style love is the opposite of the world’s power-based, accomplishment-equals-importance viewpoint. Christian love means putting the other person first, seeking the other person’s well-being regardless of what it costs.” When we love in this manner our lives become a pleasing aroma to God. What then does this self-sacrificing love of Jesus look in action in our lives? God’s perfect love in action in Jesus’ life and in us is beautifully described in *1 Corinthians 13:4-7* as it says, “<sup>4</sup> *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud* <sup>5</sup> *or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.* <sup>6</sup> *It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.* <sup>7</sup> *Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*” If we as Christians expressed God’s love in this way in our homes, our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our recreation, our churches, in all our interactions in this world, this world would meet the God who is love in us. That is God’s one and only plan for bringing His love into this world and that is the greatest call that we have as children of God in this torn up,

hurting, broken world that desperately is longing to experiencing the full expression of God's love.

If you have not accepted God's unconditional love for you, please do not put it off any longer. You cannot earn it as God loves you just because. God loves you so much that he sent His Son to come into this world to offer you God's unconditional love for you. He now invites you to accept His love for you and invite Him to come into your life and then He will begin to love through you.

**SUGGESTED RESOURCES:** (Books marked with \* are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *The God Who Is There*, Francis Schaeffer
- *The Reason for God*, Tim Keller
- *Creation Regained*, Albert M. Wolters
- *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer
- *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer
- *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, D. A. Carson
- *The Prodigal God*, Tim Keller

### **Icebreaker Questions**

1. What is one way someone showed you love or kindness recently that made a difference in your week?
2. If you had to describe love using only one word (other than "love"), what word would you choose and why?

### **Sermon Discussion Questions**

1. John writes, "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). How is that different from simply saying "God loves us"? Why does that distinction matter?
2. The sermon emphasized that God's love is demonstrated through Jesus coming into the world. How does Jesus help us understand what God's love looks like in practical, everyday life?
3. Which of the seven characteristics of God's love (uncaused, unreasonable, unending, unlimited, unchanging, uncomplicated, unconditional) most encourages or challenges you right now? Why?
4. 1 John 4:11-12 teaches that God's love is brought to full expression through us. What are some practical ways Christians can demonstrate God's love in their homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and church?
5. The passage says that "perfect love expels all fear" (1 John 4:18). What fears can keep us from fully trusting God or loving others well? How does experiencing God's love help overcome those fears?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week's sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?

Lord, thank You for loving us 'just because.' Help us receive Your unconditional love more fully and become faithful channels of that love to a world that desperately needs to know You. Amen.