



Made For More Community
Sep 30: Test Every Teaching

Series Summary: One word defines the message of 1, 2, & 3 John: Love. Specifically, God's sacrificial and perfect agape Love. This love is so perfect and so powerful, it does not lead us the way it finds us. It transforms us. It marks us. In this small group series, we will see how God's agape love for his people transforms us and every part of our lives.

Big Idea: How does God's 'agape' love impact our love and character? How does God's agape love help us fight against false teachings?

Schedule:

- Worship
- Video teaching
- Small group

LIVE TEACHING

Series Lead in: One word defines the message of 1, 2, & 3 John: Love. Specifically, God's sacrificial and perfect agape Love. This love is so perfect and so powerful, it does not lead us the way it finds us. It transforms us. It marks us. In this small group series, we will see how God's agape love for his people transforms us and every part of our lives.

GOD IS LOVE

One word defines the message of 1, 2, & 3 John: Love. Specifically, God's sacrificial and perfect "agape" Love. **What is that?** How is "agape love" different from other types of love? The essence of agape love is goodwill, benevolence, and willful

delight in the object of love. Unlike our English word *love*, *agape* is not used in the New Testament to refer to romantic or sexual love (eros). Nor does it refer to close friendship or brotherly love, for which the Greek word *philia* is used. Agape love involves faithfulness, commitment, and an act of the will. It is distinguished from the other types of love by its lofty moral nature and strong character.¹

1 John 4:7-8 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love

God is Love! Love comes from God. If we love, it is because we have been born of God and we know God. How can this be? Because God is love. Meaning God is the perfect embodiment of love. God is love because in Him we find love's definition and source.

The same is not true in reverse. Love is not God. Love does not define God. God defines Love. Specifically, God defines agape love.

The question we want to dive into over the next four weeks is how are we to respond to the agape love of God. To be more specific, how are we to reflect the agape love of God? **If we are to reflect the love of God, we must fully understand the nature of God's agape love.**

GOD'S AGAPE LOVE

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

His love was first. He loved us before we loved Him. Not only that, but he loved us when we had nothing to offer in return.

His love was sacrificial. So much so that Jesus' death (atoning sacrifice) exemplified it. Atoning means that Jesus' death paid the penalty.

1 John 4:11-12 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

His love transforms us: God's love not only justifies us, it also sanctifies us. Meaning God's love allows us to enter into heaven as forgiven believers. But it also

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/agape-love.html>

transforms us here and now. It shapes us into a people of God willing to love one another. In this way it is made complete in us.

1 John 4:13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.

His love is continual: Jesus loves us so much that he gives us his Spirit. He indwells within us (1 Cor 6:19).

When Jesus told the disciples that he would soon die and be taken away from them, he promised that they would not be left alone as orphans. But the Advocate (the Spirit) would be with them (John 14-15). We do not abandon those we love.

1 John 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

His love saves, and it doesn't just save a select few. His love is available to the world. God loves the world so much that he sent his only and only Son to die for them (John 3:16).

1 John 4:15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.

His love is relational. Because of how sacrificial God's love is, we can now enter into an eternal relationship with God. Our God desires for us to know Him.

1 John 4:16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

His love is essential. We must remember the nature of God's love each and every day. We must do this because we have a tendency to drift away from it and forget just how great the Father's love is for us. Therefore we must test every teaching...

TEST EVERY TEACHING

1 John 5:21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols

The church John was speaking to was not turning to Greek gods or local pagan deities. The idols they were tempted to turn to were self-proclaimed "Christian" ones. Meaning there were false teachers that were leading people astray that claimed to be worshiping and following Jesus, but it was a version of Jesus that

they had created and had nothing to do with the historical Jesus of the Bible, the man John followed for and learned from for three years.

Why does this matter for us today? We're capable of hearing everyone's opinion on social media.

- They may not be right.
- Their main objective could be to make Christians question Jesus.
- Just because someone is a Christian, doesn't mean they're automatically going to say biblical truth.
- A lot of people like to voice their feelings and opinions over God's Truth.
- We can't afford to take things for granted just because someone might label themselves a Christian or "religious".

Transition to small group: When we fully understand just how great the Father's love for us is, we will test every teaching.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. **God's love does not leave us unchanged—it transforms us (sanctifies us). Where have you seen God's love change your attitudes, priorities, or relationships?**
2. **John ends his letter by saying, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (5:21). Why do you think that is such a fitting conclusion after everything he says about God's love?**

Leader Note: God showed his agape love towards us by sacrificing everything so that we may be redeemed. That is the good news of the Gospel. We see God's love in the Gospel. That is why it is such a tragedy when people trade in the love displayed for the one, true Gospel for the lie of a false Gospel.

3. **Where do you think we need to be the most on-guard against hearing or believing false teachings?**

Leader Note: The two most dangerous places is more than likely school (because of everyone's opinions), and then social media (the same reason). Christian TikTok isn't

always a safe place for Christians– not every one is biblically literate, not everyone has sound doctrine, not everyone has the best interest of others, some people like to voice their feelings and opinions over the Truth of scripture.

4. What are some false “gospels” that give people a false sense of salvation?

Leader Note/Possible Answers:

- Being a “good person” (Romans 3:10-12)
- Doing enough “good things” (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Trying to get by on church attendance
- Genetics (“my parents are Christian”; no one is born a Christian)
- “There are many ways to get to Heaven” (John 14:6)
- Self-sufficiency/“be the best version of yourself” (Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:30)

Read 1 John 4:1-6 together as a group

- 5. (Lead-In)** Vs 1: When the Apostle John says that we must test every spirit, he is stating that we must test every teaching and teacher to see if what they say is true (of the Spirit of God).

How do we go about testing every teaching? How do you know if a teaching is truly false?

Leader Note: A good way of thinking about this– does the teaching/opinion attack the gospel of Jesus? Does it attack the deity or fullness of Jesus?

Additional Note: One thing that is important to remember is that there is a difference between doctrinal differences that Christians (brothers and sisters in Christ) can disagree on, and the heretical teachings that John was warning the church against. The difference between those can be fleshed out in the next question.

- 6. (Lead-In)** Vs 2-3: Any spirit or teaching that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from the Spirit of God and therefore is not true. Jesus’ status as the one and only Son of God, redeemer of the world, and long-awaited Messiah is non-negotiable.

What are some other non-negotiables of the Christian Faith?

Leader Note: The following possible answers are ones that attack or insult the Gospel or fullness of Jesus. These should be non-negotiables...

Possible Answers:

- There cannot be a works-based salvation. If someone claims salvation by works then it's false.
- The wholeness of the trinity (3 persons in one God) (Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not separate or lesser gods)
- Jesus was NOT a created being (John 1:1)
- Jesus was fully man AND fully God
- Jesus's death and resurrection was literal, not figurative.

7. Vs 4. What did John mean when he said that the “one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world?” Why is this good news?

Leader Note: The context that the Apostle John was speaking about here was that he who is in us (Jesus) is greater than he who is in the world (Satan). There is no comparison.

- Our God is greater, and he is for us (Rom 8:31). This is so important to remember when we are confronted with the false teaching and brokenness in the world. Our God is greater. Our Savior has come. The enemy will one day be fully defeated.
- When the enemy tries to trick us with false teachings, we have a way out of the temptation to believe it. The One who is in us will convict and lead us away from false teachings.