

VOTC 2 - 1 John 4:7-12 – “God is Love”

Welcome back to our next meditation here at VOTC. Today we'll consider our first motivation

1 Jn. 4 is a familiar place of the bible for both Christians & non-Christians alike, b/c in this ch. we read those *wonderful & well-known* words, *God is love*. It is beautiful phrase. It's an important phrase. It's also sometimes a misunderstood phrase. But this phrase is part of love's foundation. God is the supreme being of love who defines love for us & is worthy of all our love.

1. For John, the love of God is a very practical reality for us as believers. John here shows us here how the love of God motivates us in our love for one another. In this series we'll consider three reasons why we are to love, and first we consider this first reason, because who God is...

Because of *Who* God Is (v.7-8)

2. Like a good teacher or preacher, John repeats this key theme to love one another, but you'll notice he does so with new information and motivation for us to consider. 1st he says...
 - a. Whoever loves has been ***born of God***. That phrase, “born of God” is a key phrase in Jn that speaks of those who have been made supernaturally alive by the Spirit. The work of the Spirit in us *produces* new actions. Those born of God believe in Christ (5:1). Everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him (2:29). Those born of God love God. To be born of God *precedes* these actions. You don't obey to get new life; you believe & walk in holiness b/c you have received new life.
 - i. One of the greatest evidences that someone knows God and has spent time in his presence, is that they are people of love.
 - b. IL: we got to visit our family in CA recently, we got to go to Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. At the amusement prk was the log ride. Water-ride on log through rapids & drops & all the rest. & on that ride, there were warnings, “you will get wet on this ride.” You can tell who had been on that ride b/c you'd see people there laughing and dripping with water. *John says, you can tell those people who have truly experienced God, and have spent time in his presence, b/c they are people who drip with love! The love of God exudes from those who are born of God!
 - c. Those who ***do not love*** show they don't know God. These pple may be religious, they may be very knowledgeable, may be witty and eloquent, but if they do not love fellow image bearers than they are not of God. **Jn 2:11**, “*whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in darkness, and he does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*”
 - d. This was the problem with these false teachers. They claimed that what mattered on this earth was not loving folks in practical ways but have a private experience. Again, John tells us that the litmus test that we know God is not being able to pass a theological test, but it is public love for brothers and sisters in Christ.

3. *Why* do true Christians drip with love? B/c Christians reflect the character of God himself (v.8).
4. **God IS love.** What does this mean? 1st, this means that the one true God - Father Son & Holy Spirit, has eternally been love in his very being. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, & the Spirit binds them together in perfect love.
 - a. If God were not triune, we could not say God is love. We could only say God is loving. **Islam** also says that **Allah** is a loving god, but he cannot be love in the same way as the Christian God. Since Allah is only *one* person, how could he be love *in* himself before the world was created? Who would there be to love? We could only say that he has the capacity to love.
 - b. But the Christian God revealed in the scriptures has eternally expressed love in himself even before the world was created. Jesus said to his Father in **Jn 17:24** *“you loved me before the foundation of the world.”* This is an **eternal** and **everlasting** love.
5. 2nd, this means that God’s character grounds our behavior as Christians. The scriptures say God is *holy*, and therefore we are to be holy. The scripture say God is morally *perfect*, and so we are called to be perfect like our Father in heaven. The scriptures say he is *merciful*, and so we ought to be merciful.
 - a. God’s commands are not arbitrary commands meant to kill our joy. But they are commands that flow from his character. And all that God does he does in love. His discipline flows from love. The trials he sends flow from love. All that he does, he does in holiness, righteousness, and love. And so we can know what God calls us to is good, even when that’s hard for us...
 - b. EX: Jackie Hill Perry is a well-known hip hop artist, writer, and poet. She is also a Christian believer who was formerly a lesbian. She wrote an incredible book about her story called, *“Gay girl, Good God.”* In one part of the book, she is very honest about her struggle to end the relationship with her girlfriend that she loved so much. She writes in her book:
 - c. *“why would God want to keep me from this? I thought again – wasn’t HE love?...On the other hand, if he was love, the embodiment of it without the slightest wrinkle in his robe, what love is when devils cannot interfere – then all other loves must’ve been a lesser love at best. Could it be that God would not have me going about the rest of my life believing that these lesser forms of “love” were the real thing?”*
 - d. APP: We don’t need to be SSA to see that our loves are all disordered this side of heaven. There are things in our own life where we ask the same question, *“why would God keep this from me? It feels so natural to want it.”* But when God summons us to the path of self-denial, we can trust his Word is good for b/c it flows from the God who IS love! By faith, we do not as we please...but (Perry)

6. Why ought we to love God & follow his standard of love? B/c of who God is! **Eph.5:1**, *Be imitators of God as beloved children & walk-in love.*
- a. Before we came into contact with God, we imitated the patterns of this fallen world. What marked us was *hatred, division, discord, & fighting*. That's what we see in the world today.
 - b. But it should not be so among the people of God! We might *naturally want* to fight against each other at times – maybe we come from different backgrounds, political convictions, child rearing philosophy, covid-19 convictions. But the love of God is what grounds our behavior toward one another. May we remember that most blessed truth, that God IS love as we navigate things.

Thank you for joining us today. May the Lord bless you and continue to help you by his grace to Love more like God.