

## God is Love (1 John 4:1-12)

I like abstract art. An artist's reason for doing it isn't usually clear and so it invites us to arrive at our own interpretation of it. Unfortunately, the statement "God is love" is often treated like an abstract piece of art to be interpreted by each viewer. The Apostle John brings such clarity we're left staring at a tangible love, a love that is for us and works through us. Here we find out what happens when God's love moves from the abstract to the tangible.

### 1. How to know and overcome deceivers (1 John 4:1-6)

*"Don't believe everything you hear...carefully weigh and examine what people tell you."*

Test = prove, try; examine, discern, scrutinize, approve after trial

Jesus' coming in the flesh is not an optional add-on.

If you hear a teacher or so-called prophet claiming to speak for God, claiming to say what they believe God is speaking and they deny or diminish the truth about Jesus then they are false. John 1:14

V4 *"for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*

VV5-6 Who do they listen to + who listens to them? John 10:27

### 2. How to know and make known the love of God (1 John 4:7-12)

*"love one another!"* We're to reflect God's love. = "born of God" John 1:12-13; Ephesians 4:31-5:2

V8 **God is love.**

Jl Packer: *"His love finds expression in everything he says and does."*

AW Tozer: *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*

VV9-10 **God sent love for us.**

Jesus is the propitiation (atoning sacrifice) "for our sins" absorbing the divine wrath we deserve that we might be forgiven and made alive. Romans 8:31-32, 38-39; Galatians 2:20

VV11-12 **God shows love through us**

The logic is this: *"IF God SO loved us..."*

God is made known / seen in and through Jesus. John 1:18; Colossians 1:15

God sent his love *for us* and decides to show his love *through us*.

John says, *"his love is perfected in us"* (made complete / reaches its aim)!

This is what happens when God's love moves from the abstract to the tangible.

**QUESTIONS** (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read 1 John 4:1-6. John says, "test the spirits to see if they are from God." The problem with false prophets is that you can't tell them apart from true ones at first sight. They seem legit, they seem reasonable, they claim to speak truth. What does John say is the test to discern true and false prophets? Read 1 John 4:3-3; John 1:14
2. Where do we find "the spirit of the antichrist" today, diminishing or denying the person and work of Jesus?
3. John writes that "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (V4). Why do you think followers of Jesus so often forget about that reality?
4. Read 1 John 4:7-12. Why do you think the statement "God is love" has become a "pass" for some to live however they want to live?
5. How does John move the topic of God's love from the abstract to the tangible? See 1 John 4:9-11
6. Jesus became a propitiation (atoning sacrifice) "for our sins" absorbing the divine wrath we deserve that we might be forgiven and made alive. Have you taken this reality personally? If so, what is it producing in you? Romans 8:31-32, 38-39; Galatians 2:20
7. In 1 John 4:11-12 we discover the love of God is put on bold display *through* our love for one another. People cannot see God BUT they will see him through our love for one another. What kind of priority does that place on loving one another?

Pray that the reality of God's love will be more and more evident through us to the people of St. Pete. Make an effort to turn your prayers away from the abstract and think of specific people you have trouble loving. Pray for those people and for yourself, that the relationship would be built or rebuilt.