

# **Loving the Hard to Love**

## **1 John 4:7-11**

**In 1 John 4:7-11 (the passage we just read) you can't help but notice that the word "love" or a form of the word is used again and again. In these five short verses the word "love" or a form of the word is used 11 times (in the NIV).**

**As you read on in 1 John 4 you soon discover that this frequent usage of the word "love" continues. In verses 12 thru**

**21 the word “love” or a form of the word is used an additional 16 times. That’s a whole lot of love! [“Whole Lotta Love” was Led Zeppelin’s first big hit; the song was #4 on the charts in 1969] Why all this love? Why did John use the word “love” so frequently?**

**We could say that love is mentioned so often because love is one of the most important aspects of the Christian faith. That would be the simple answer. But I think there’s more to it than that; there**

**seems to be another reason for the frequent usage of the word “love” in this particular section of 1 John.**

**In 1 John 4:1, the Apostle John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, instructs his readers (that includes you and me) to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”**

**Not everyone who claims to be a prophet of God IS a prophet of God. A prophet’s words MUST be tested.**

**How do we test the words of a prophet? By comparing a prophet's words to the Word of God. If the words of a prophet are in harmony with the Bible, the inspired Word of God, accept them; if they're not, reject them.**

**You and I must use the Word of God to test the words of those who claim to be prophets of God. We must also use the Word of God to expose those who are FALSE prophets.**

**In 2 Timothy 3:16, the Apostle Paul tells us to use Scripture to rebuke and correct – to expose the wolves in sheep’s clothing who are leading the world astray. But as we do this rebuking and correcting, we must always be careful to do it with a kind and gentle spirit (see 2 Tim. 2:24-26 and 1 Pet. 3:15,16) – with a spirit of love, not hate. An ex-Mormon who was converted to true Christianity stated that his biggest criticism of most of the Christians he had met prior to his**

**conversion was that they showed little or no love in pointing out the errors of Mormonism.**

**Yes, we must expose false doctrine and false prophets; but in the process we must make sure that our love for God and people is also exposed. Which brings us back to the question “Why all this talk about love in 1 John 4?”**

**The reason John talks so much about love in this section of his letter is because he wants us to understand that**

**EVERYTHING** we do, including our rebuking and correcting of false prophets, **MUST** be done in a spirit of love. In all that we do our love must shine through!

This morning, as we take a good look at 1 John 4:7-11, we're going to talk about love. We going to talk about the source of love; we're going to talk once again about the greatest demonstration of love; and finally, we're going to talk about God's command to love others like he loves us. As we consider this third and

**final point, we're going to look at some practical suggestions that can help us to love those who are hard to love.**

**Keeping these things in mind, let's look now at 1 John 4, beginning with verses 7 and 8. In 1 John 4:7,8 we read, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God [God is the source of love ; loves comes from him].**

**Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."**

**Earlier, in 1 John 1:5, we learned that God is light – that he is absolutely perfect, absolutely holy, and absolutely true.**

**Now, in 1 John 4:8, we learn that God is love (compare 1 John 4:16). God IS love and everything he does is done in love.**

**This does NOT mean that God will overlook the sins of those who have rejected his plan of salvation. Because God IS love and everything he does is done in love, some people have reasoned that he would never allow anyone to go to**

**hell. [About a year ago, a local pastor made a statement to this affect at one of our Northern Berks Ministerium meetings. He insisted that everyone goes to heaven. Three other pastors agreed with him.] Yes, God is love. But God is also just (see 1 John 1:9). And because he IS just he cannot and will not let sin go unpunished. That's what justice is all about. But let's not forget about love.**

**The love of God, specifically his love for us, moved him to provide a way for us**

**to be redeemed (saved) from the penalty of sin. God's way to be saved from the penalty of sin – the only way to be saved from the penalty of sin – is the way of Jesus Christ. Jesus died on a cross to give us life. And that life – eternal life – is given to all who accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.**

**Listen to the words of 1 John 5:11,12.**

**“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in the Son [the Lord Jesus]. He who has the Son has**

**life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”**

**2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God doesn't want anyone to perish (to go to hell). But if we neglect or reject what God had done to keep us from perishing – if we neglect or reject the cross of Christ – we WILL perish! This is the truth of the Word of God, and any pastor or teacher who says otherwise is NOT a prophet of God.**

**Back when we looked at 1 John 3:11-18, we learned that God's love – agape**

**love ... the love that's mentioned 42 times in 1 John – is unconditional (it's about loving no matter what), unselfish (it's about loving without expecting anything in return), and sacrificial (it's a love that leads you to give up something you could have kept for your self). This is how God loves us. And in 1 John 4:7 we learn that this is the kind of love that God puts in the heart of those who truly love him.**

**This agape love – this Jesus-like love for others – is a sure sign that you have**

**been born of God ... it's a sure sign that you have become a new creation in Christ Jesus (see 1 John 4:7 and 2 Cor. 5:17).**

**Those who truly love God will also love people. Because Christians aren't perfect, this love for people won't be manifested perfectly all of the time. But it SHOULD be manifested MOST of the time.**

**Love – not hate – will prevail in the life of true followers of Christ. According to 1 John 4:8 (compare 1 John 2:9), the**

**person who hates continuously with no  
desire or intent to repent does not know  
God and is not a follower of Christ. 1**

**John 2:6 says, “Whoever claims to live in  
him [whoever claims to be a follower of  
Christ] must walk as Jesus did.” Anyone  
can talk the Jesus talk, but TRUE  
followers of Jesus walk the Jesus walk!**

**Jesus talked the love talk and he  
walked the love walk. He TOLD people  
to love and he showed people HOW to  
love. He taught people to love by loving**

**people. His love for people led to action.**

**His love for people put him on a cross.**

**In 1 John 4:9,10 we find these words.**

**“This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.**

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

**God proved to us that he loves us by sending his Son, the Lord Jesus, to this earth to die for us. According to 1 John**

**4:10 (compare 1 John 2:2), Christ's death was/is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

**What does that mean? The word "atone" means "to make amends for; to make up for something; to satisfy a wrong, loss or injury." In the Biblical context the word "atone" is used to refer to what Jesus did to reconcile us to God.**

**Sin separates us from God (see Rom. 6:23); Christ's sacrificial death for our sin reconciles us to God (see 2 Cor. 5:18,19 and Col. 1:21,22) – it takes away our sin**

**and enables us to have a living, loving relationship with our heavenly Father.**

**Isn't that neat?**

**Christ died for the sins of the world (see John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2); he died to reconcile all mankind to God. However, we need to understand that not everyone is reconciled or redeemed automatically. To BE reconciled ... to BE redeemed ... to RECEIVE the gift of eternal life, you must understand who Jesus is, you must understand what he did on the cross, and**

**you must accept him as your personal Savior and Lord (see John 1:12 and 1 John 5:11,12).**

**Those of us who have accepted Christ understand that what he did on the cross was special. It was special because of its atoning value and it was special because it was for people who were hard to love.**

**John 1:11 tells us that God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, “came to that which was his own [his world – the world he created], but his own [people – the people**

**of Israel] did not receive him.” The Bible DOESN’T say, “For the world so loved God that he gave his one and only Son.”**

**No. It says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16). God loved hard to love people and demonstrated his love by giving those hard to love people Jesus.**

**God is love and everything he does is done in love. His love for us resulted in greatest demonstration of love. His love for us led him to sacrifice his one and only**

**Son for us. Aren't you glad that God is love? Aren't you glad that God loves the hard to love?**

**I'd like to talk about one more thing this morning. I'd like to discuss briefly what John says in 1 John 4:11. It's something we've talked about before.**

**This is what he says: "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we ought to love one another."**

**God wants us to love like he loves (see John 13:34). He wants us to love**

**unconditionally (no matter what); he wants us to love unselfishly (without expecting anything in return); and he wants us to love sacrificially (love in a way that leads us to give up things we could have kept for ourselves). He wants us not just to love easy to love people; he wants us to love hard to love people, as well. He wants us to love ALL people – friends AND enemies (see Matt. 5:44).**

**I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "How can I do this?" Here's**

**how. To love like Jesus loves we need two things: desire and power. If we really want to love like Jesus loves, God – through the indwelling Holy Spirit – will give us the power to love like Jesus loves. If we do what we can do, God will do what we can't do.**

**You say, “Pastor, what if I don't feel like loving my neighbor?” Do it anyway! You can either live your life according to your feelings or you can live your life according to the Word of God.**

**You say, “Pastor, if I do something I don’t want to do, isn’t that hypocritical?”**

**No. It’s what I call loving by faith – it’s doing what you SHOULD do, trusting that God will ultimately make you feel good about doing it. When you love by faith you ACT yourself into a feeling.**

**It’s easier to act your way into a feeling than to feel your way into an action. If I act enthusiastic, I’ll soon feel enthusiastic. If I act like I’m happy, before you know it I’ll feel happy.**

**We can't change our feelings directly,  
but we can change them indirectly by  
changing our thoughts and actions.**

**When we THINK right – when we fill our  
mind and heart with the things of God –  
and we ACT right – the way God wants  
us to act – we will feel right. Think right!  
Act right! Feel right!**

**The world has tried to convince us that  
love is nothing more than a feeling; it's  
something you can't explain, but when it  
happens, you know it. This may be true**

**in Hollywood, but in HOLYWOOD – in  
JESUSLAND – love is the unconditional,  
unselfish, sacrificial giving of oneself to  
another. That’s how Jesus loves and  
that’s how Jesus wants us to love.**

**In Luke 6:27,28, Jesus tells us how to  
act in a loving way (love is an action verb)  
toward our enemies. This also applies to  
hard to love people.**

**In Luke 6:27,28, Jesus says, “But I tell  
you who hear me: Love your enemies, do  
good to those who hate you, bless those**

**who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”**

**First, do something good. Look for ways to give to that hard to love person.**

**What can I do to meet that person’s need, to help him, to benefit him?**

**Second, bless that person who is hard to love. We bless people by the way we talk to them and the way we talk about them. A blessing is a positive word spoken to or about others. Instead of**

**putting people down, we need to lift people up.**

**Third, pray for that person who is hard to love. Praying for hard to love people might not change them, but it will change us.**

**Do good, bless, and pray – that’s the Jesus way to love the hard to love. If we think right and act right, we will feel right.**

**There’s a sign I put up on one of the bulletin boards in the church. It talks**

**about what I've been talking about this morning – making a conscious choice to do things God's way, no matter what.**

**The title of the message on the sign is “Do It Anyway.” This is what it says.**

**READ SIGN**