



“God Is Love”

DIVINE DICTIONARY

Small Group Plan

Of all powers, love is the most powerful and the most powerless. It is the most powerful because it alone can conquer that final and most impregnable stronghold which is the human heart. It is the powerless because it can do nothing except by consent.

-- From *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*
by Frederick Buechner

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Which is most powerful, love or fear? Explain.
- Briefly tell of a time when you saw each in control of a life.

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— WHAT GOD IS —

“GOD IS LOVE”

1 John 4:7-8

⁷ *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.*

- Explain the difference between “*I love you because of ...*” and “*I love you in spite of ...*”.
- How does God show “*in spite of ...*” in his relationship with us?
- How can we show “*in spite of ...*” in our relationships with each other?
- What does John mean – “*God is love*”? How is God the very definition of love?

— WHAT GOD DID —

“HE SENT HIS ONE AND ONLY SON”

1 John 4:9-11

⁹ *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.* 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. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

- Why did God send his son into the world (v. 9)?
- Why is it important to know that we are not the source of love (v. 10)?
- How does God teach us to love (v.11)?

— WHAT GOD IS DOING —
“GOD LIVES IN US”
1 John 4:12-16

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. ¹³ We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

- Compare 1 John 4:12 “No one has ever seen God but ...” with John 1:18 “No one has ever seen God but ...” The same writer, John, uses the same words. How does John 1 help to define the meaning of 1 John 4?
- What does it mean to “rely” on God’s love (v. 16)? What does relying on God’s love look like?

— WHAT GOD WANTS —
“LOVE IS MADE COMPLETE”
1 John 4:17-21

¹⁷ In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- Why does fear so easily overcome us?
- How does “perfect love” drive out fear (v.18)?
- How can our fears keep us from loving others?
- Why can John say so confidently that we are lying when say we love God while we harbor hate for our brother?

- **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**
- God's love for us cost him his son. Jesus' love for us cost him his life. What would it cost you to love someone?
- Without revealing any names, think of someone who is difficult for you to love. How does John's discussion of love speak to you? What does he teach you?
- Thank God in prayer for his love – that he loves us, not **because of** our abilities or achievements, but **in spite of** our weaknesses and failures. Ask him to teach us how to love others.