

Basic Theology Series: God Is Love

Main Truth: God is love. This does not mean that love is God, or that God is only loving. It means that love belongs perfectly to God's eternal nature. Everything God does is consistent with His holy, good, just, wise, and unchanging love.

Key Scriptures

1 John 4:7–10

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God... God is love... In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son..."

Exodus 34:6–7

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..."

Romans 5:8

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

John 13:34–35

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another..."

Group Question: "When people today say, 'Love means accepting me,' or 'Love means letting me do what makes me happy,' what do they usually mean?"

Culture often defines love as approval, attraction, emotion, tolerance, or making someone feel good. But the Bible gives us a richer and deeper picture. Biblical love is not less than affection, but it is much more than affection. Biblical love is faithful, self-giving, truthful, and committed to another person's real good before God. Today we are going to learn that God is love, and because God is love, we can know what love truly is.

1. God Is Love, But Love Is Not God

Read 1 John 4:7–10.

The Bible says, "God is love." That is one of the most beautiful statements in Scripture. But we need to understand it carefully. The Bible does not say, "Love is God." That would mean whatever we call love must be accepted as divine or right. That is how many people in our culture think. They begin with their definition of love and then judge God by it. But the Bible starts the other way. The Bible begins with God. God defines love because love comes from Him.

God is not loving because He follows some outside standard of love. God is love in Himself. Before God created the world, He was already love. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have eternally existed in perfect love, fellowship, and unity.

So when we say “God is love,” we do not mean God is only love. God is also holy, just, good, sovereign, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, and all-powerful. God’s love is holy love. God’s love is just love. God’s love is wise love. God’s love never contradicts His other attributes.

Whole Group Question: Why is it important to let God define love instead of letting culture define love?

2: Old Testament Love: Hesed

In the Old Testament, one of the most important words connected to God’s love is the Hebrew word hesed. You may see this translated in different ways: steadfast love, lovingkindness, covenant love, faithful love, mercy. Hesed is not weak or shallow love. It is loyal, committed, covenant-keeping love.

Read Exodus 34:6–7.

When God revealed Himself to Moses, He described Himself as merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. That means God is not moody, careless, or unreliable in His love. He is faithful.

God’s hesed love is seen in the way He keeps His promises to His people, even when they fail. Israel often sinned, complained, doubted, and turned away from the Lord. Yet God remained faithful to His covenant promises. This does not mean God ignored sin. Exodus 34 also says God “will by no means clear the guilty.” God’s love does not cancel His justice. But His love is patient, merciful, and faithful.

Family Discussion: “What does it mean that God’s love is faithful?”

3: New Testament Love: Agape

In the New Testament, one of the major words for love is the Greek word agape. Agape love is often used to describe self-giving, sacrificial love. It is love that seeks the true good of another, even at great cost.

Read Romans 5:8.

God did not wait for us to become lovable before He loved us. God loved us while we were still sinners. That does not mean God approved of our sin. It means God acted in love to rescue us from sin. The clearest picture of God’s love is the cross of Jesus Christ. At the cross, we see:

God’s holiness, because sin is serious.

God’s justice, because sin is judged.

God’s mercy, because sinners are rescued.

God’s love, because Christ gave Himself for us.

The cross keeps us from believing two wrong ideas.

First, it keeps us from thinking God's love means sin does not matter. Sin matters so much that Jesus had to die for it.

Second, it keeps us from thinking God is cold or cruel toward sinners. God loved us so much that He sent His Son to save us.

Family Discussion: Why is the cross the clearest picture of God's love?

4: Biblical Love vs. Cultural Love

Now let's compare biblical love with the way our culture often defines love. Culture often says: "Love means approving of whatever I want." But the Bible says love rejoices with the truth. Love does not celebrate sin or encourage people toward destruction.

Culture often says: "Love is mostly a feeling." But the Bible says love acts. God shows His love. Christ died for us. Love is more than emotion; it is faithful action.

Culture often says: "Love means making someone happy." But the Bible says love seeks someone's true good. Sometimes love comforts. Sometimes love corrects. Sometimes love sacrifices. Sometimes love says no.

Culture often says: "Love is whatever feels right to me." But the Bible says God defines love. We do not decide what love is by looking inside ourselves. We learn love by looking at God and at the cross of Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 briefly or summarize:

Family Discussion "Can you think of a time when real love might have to say no?"

Biblical love is not approval of everything. Biblical love is faithful, truthful, and seeks what is truly good.

5. What God's Love Means for the Believer

1. God's love gives us security. If you belong to Christ, God's love for you is not fragile. He does not love you because you are impressive. He loves you because He is loving, faithful, and gracious.

That means believers can rest in God's love even when they struggle, suffer, or fail. We confess sin and return to Him, not because we are trying to earn His love, but because He has already loved us in Christ.

2. God's love teaches us to love others. **Read** John 13:34–35.

Jesus said His disciples should be known by love. The church should be a place where God's love is displayed. That means Christians should be patient, forgiving, truthful, generous, and sacrificial. We love our families, our church, our neighbors, and even our enemies because God first loved us.

Is Love Communable or Non Communable?

3. God's love gives us a mission. God's love should move us outward. If God loved sinners enough to send His Son, then we should care about people hearing the gospel. Christian love is

not just being nice. Christian love wants people to know Christ, be forgiven, and walk in truth. Because God loved us first, we now love others with faithful, truthful, sacrificial love.

Conclusion

Today we learned that God is love. That does not mean God approves of everything. It does not mean love is whatever we feel. It means God Himself is the source and standard of true love.

In the Old Testament, we see God's **hesed** — His steadfast, covenant-keeping love.

In the New Testament, we see God's **agape** — His self-giving, sacrificial love.

And we see both most clearly in Jesus Christ.

God's love is faithful.

God's love is holy.

God's love is truthful.

God's love is sacrificial.

God's love saves sinners.

God's love teaches us to love.

Family Discussion and Closing Prayer: "How do we know God loves us?"

Optional Take-Home Prompt for Families

This week, read 1 John 4:7–12 together as a family.

Ask:

What does this passage teach us about God's love?

How did God show His love?

Who is one person we can show love to this week?

How can we show love in a way that is truthful and Christlike?