

SESSION 8 – WEEK OF 7 MAR. 2021

LOVING AN UNSEEN GOD

SCRIPTURE: 1JOHN 4:14-21

Theme:

Over the past few weeks, we have talked about what God's love is for us. The Apostle John described Jesus laying his life down for us as the embodiment of love. (1 John 3:16). Last week, we talked about what it means to live in Jesus' love and how God lives in us when we love one another. This week, we continue to discuss John's encouragement to complete Christ's love by loving one another as we approach the Day of Judgement. Our focus is on the question: if you cannot love a person you can see, how can you love a God that you have not seen?

Key Verse:

"Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." 1 John 4:20

Read 1John 4:14-21

Core Questions for Discussion

(If your group meets fortnightly, combine Core Questions of two sessions and choose one Further Question from either session.)

1. The Apostle John says that someone that lives in love will live in God as well. What is the link between the two?

2. The Apostle John describes God's love as 'complete' (v.17) and 'perfect' (v.18). Why does God's love need to be made complete and perfect?

What does 'This' in verse 17 refer to?

John refers to 'This' as a concept that makes God's love complete.

Read verses 16-17 a few times with your group in both the NIV and ESV version. Ask your group if they can spot any differences as to what 'This' refers to in the two versions.

In the ESV, it is backward-referring. 'This' refers to verse 16 and the idea that God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In the NIV, it is forward-referring. 'This' refers to the clause: 'In this world we are like Jesus.'

"The NIV suggests that the *en toutō* ("in this"; NIV, "in this way") that opens this verse refers to what John has just said in v. 16, so that to "live in love" and have "God live" in oneself is the most complete form of love ... It seems more likely that John is using this phrase to introduce the test that follows the *hoti* later in the verse. Those who pass the test that John is about to offer can be assured that love is perfected in them."

-Adapted from Tom Thatcher, "1 John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews-Revelation (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 482-484.

3. Why do we need to be confident as the Day of Judgement approaches? How does living in God's love provide us with confidence and overcome our fears?
4. John encourages us to love others because we have received God's love. (v.19) What is something God is showing me that I can do this week for a brother or sister that will reflect Christ's love?

Further Questions for Discussion

(Optional question for discussion if time permits. Do allocate adequate time for prayer and fellowship.)

5. *If you have time ...*

Take some time to ask your group if they are assured of God's love and their salvation. This is something we may take for granted as perhaps it is something we assume since we have been taught this since Sunday School. However, is this a truth that we believe fully? Perhaps there are some doubts or questions among your group members. Or maybe there are struggles of guilt that make receiving assurance challenging. Open up the floor for your group to be honest and vulnerable with their doubts and struggles and encourage one another as you share.

Prayer Suggestions

6. Would you consider praying for:

- a. Assurance of the salvation of every member in your group. Pray that they will know Christ's redeeming love personally and that they will believe that they are truly saved from eternal condemnation.
- b. Pray that we will understand the sacrificial nature of Christ's love and that the same love will overflow in our lives to the people around us. Ask God to reveal things that you hold close to your heart. If you find it difficult to sacrifice these things, ask the Holy Spirit to help soften your heart.
- c. Opportunities to reflect Christ's sacrificial love to the people around you. Ask God for His calling to a ministry that He may be calling you to serve in or someone whom He may be calling you to bring comfort to. May the Holy Spirit help you to use the time and resources that God has given you to bless the people around you.