

You Can Find Love Here

by Bryan Gibson

Want to learn a lot about love in a short period of time? Read 1 John. Various forms of the word love appear 46 times in this short epistle. Here are some questions about love that are answered in this book.

If we really want to learn the true meaning of love, where (or to whom) should we go? That's easy. "Love is of God" (4:7), or to put it another way, "God is love" (4:8, 16). The only way to determine the true meaning of love is to look at the character of God, to examine what is revealed in His word about Him and His love. "Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8), but love learned from any other source will fail. That's exactly why so many marriages fail—people are not practicing the love of God.

How has God demonstrated His love for us? Let the verses speak for themselves. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us" (3:16). "God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (4:9). "He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (4:10). "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (3:1). All this, and we didn't deserve any of it! That should tell us something about the difference between His love and what we sometimes call love.

How do we learn of God's love, and how can we be sure all this really happened? We learn of His love from the inspired testimony of the apostles: "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world" (4:14). They heard Him, saw Him, and touched Him—even after He had been raised from the dead (1:1-4). And so because the testimony of the apostles is so reliable, "we have known and believed the love that God has for us" (4:16).

When we believe the love God has for us, what effect will it have on us? It will have several effects, all of which are related. One who really believes in the love of God will 1) love God in return (4:19; 5:1); 2) will hate anything opposed to God (2:15-17; 4:1-6); 3) will keep the commandments of God (2:5; 5:2-3); and, 4) will show that same love to others, especially his brethren (3:16-18; 4:7, 11; 4:21; 5:1). It is only when love has these desired effects that we can "have boldness in the day of judgment" (4:17).

What about the poor soul who never learns to love others as God has loved him? If he still claims to love God, he is a liar. "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (4:20). This poor soul is in darkness (2:11), because he acting more like a child of the devil than a child of God (3:10-12).

"Looking for love in all the wrong places"—it's more than just a line in an old song; it's exactly what many are doing today. We know better, don't we?