



## NG Study Guide: 1 John 4:12-16, "Dwell in Love" [5.13.18]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

**Thesis:** One of the primary characteristics of God is love, and in His divine grace and mercy God has chosen to love us. He proved His love, once for all, by sending His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. God's love is available to everyone; however, each of us must personally receive His love by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. As we grow in our knowledge of and belief in God's love, our love for Him, and for others, will also grow. This growing love for others is proof we are in God's love, and His love is in us. Also, our love for others reveals God and is a powerful witness of Him to the world.

### God loves us [9-10; 14, 16]

(9-10): *"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins..."* (14): *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world..."* (16a): *"And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love..."*

The Bible reveals many aspects of God's character, including His holiness, righteousness, justice, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. However, one of the primary characteristics highlighted is God's love. Scripture reveals His love is undeserved (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-5), unstoppable (Romans 8:38-39), and unfathomable (Ephesians 3:17-19). The ultimate expression of God's love for us is the fact that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to suffer and die on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of the world.

At times, we may doubt the love God has for us. We may feel unworthy, we may feel we lose His love when we sin, we may feel we have to earn His love somehow, and we may question His love when life gets hard. However, when we experience these doubts, we need to remind ourselves of the truth that He loved us enough to sacrifice His Son, that Jesus loves us enough to give His life on the cross for us, and there is no greater way He could have shown His love for us than this.

As author Jerry Bridges wrote, "God's unfailing love for us is an objective fact affirmed over and over in the Scriptures. It is true whether we believe it or not. Our doubts do not destroy God's love, nor does our faith create it. It originates in the very nature of God, who is love, and it flows to us through our union with His beloved Son."

## **We receive God's love by believing in Jesus Christ [15-16a]**

*"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us." (15-16a)*

In this context, "confess" means to agree with God. Whoever agrees with God that Jesus is the Son of God, i.e., whoever agrees that he needs a Savior, and that Savior is Jesus, has the life of God in him, and lives in God, i.e., is saved. The use of the term, "whoever" indicates this life (salvation) is available to everyone. However, the consistent message of the Bible is each of us needs to personally believe to receive this life.

Verse 16a reveals an important fact- we must know the truth, and believe it. It is possible to know Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world, but not believe it, i.e., not choose to place one's faith in Him as Savior and surrender one's life to His Lordship. "Real faith is revealed;" in other words, authentic faith in Jesus Christ will be shown as it impacts who we are, and how we live.

## **Our love for others is proof we're in God and He's in us [12b-13, 16b]**

*"If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit...and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in Him." (12b-13; 16b)*

"Abides in" means lives in- continually; permanently. "Perfected" means completed; made whole. Our love for others is evidence that God is living in us. It is also proof His love is completing it's work in us. As we follow Jesus and grow in His love for us and our love for Him, our love for others will also increase. Love for others isn't something we can manufacture on our own. It's a result of experiencing God's love for us, and allowing His love to transform our hearts so we then in turn love others.

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, God places His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, in us. The Holy Spirit confirms in our hearts that our love for others is evidence we are in Him. He also assures us that when we are living out God's love, He is in us.

## **Our love for others reveals God to the world [12]**

*"No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us." (12)*

This statement can be confusing, because there are numerous references in Scripture about people seeing God:

Exodus 24:10- Moses, "saw the God of Israel"

Exodus 33:11- Moses spoke with God "face to face"

Genesis 32:30- Jacob saw God "face to face"

Judges 13:22- Samson's parents had "seen God"

However, in contrast to this, in Exodus 33:20 God Himself told Moses, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

The reality is God veils His essence and appears in ways human beings can understand and handle. People have seen visions of God, images of God, and appearances of God in various forms, but no one has ever seen Him in His the fullness of His glory.

The best revelation of God, the most perfect image of Him, is Jesus: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Therefore, the better we come to know Jesus, the better we will know God.

No one has ever truly seen God- but, if believers love one another, God's love is made complete in us, and this love reveals God to the world. More than miracles, wisdom, knowledge, service, or sacrifice, our love for others is the best witness of all!

Jesus was the ultimate representative of God. However, Jesus is not here any more (although He will return one day!). Therefore, believers are now God's representatives, and our love for one another is the best way to reveal Him to those around us.

### Study Guide Qs

*Q1. What is one aspect of God's love that makes it so wonderful to you?*

*Q2. How can knowing something be different than believing it?*

*Q3. How can following Jesus help us grow in our love for others?*

*Q4. How does loving others reveal God to the world?*

### "Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Click on the link below and read through the verses there about love. Take time to pray and thank God for His love for you.

<https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/debbie-mcdaniel/50-verses-of-love-to-cover-any-shade-of-grey.html>

2. Write down the names of the people in your life with whom you struggle to love. Pray and ask the Lord to remind you of how much He loves you, how much He loves them, and ask Him to help you love them.

### Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

If you don't already know them, make it a goal to learn the names of your neighbors. Start a written list, and add to it as you discover more. Keep the list handy, and every time you see it, take time to pray for each name on your list.

### Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

### Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

### Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
3. **The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. **What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.