

December 1/2, 2001

Study Questions

Cultivating Authentic Christian Community: A Study in 1 John

God Is Love

1 John 4:7-21

Opening Discussion

1. What do you believe to be the most effective way to communicate to people the true meaning of Christmas?
2. In what way does your experience of loving and being loved affect your concept of what it means to be loved by God?
3. What possible motives might people have for obeying God's commandments? Which of these motivations do you consider to be positive?
4. Do you think the general public would identify Christians as loving people? Why or why not? What has been your experience with how Christians love one another?

Bible Study

1. Read and summarize the first two passages on love in 1 John.

1 John 2:7-17:

1 John 3:13-24:

2. What does John say about how we have been loved by God in 4:7-11? Compare with the following verses from John's Gospel: John 3:16; 13:34,35; 14:12,13

How do John's words help prepare us for the Christmas season?

3. Read 4:12-16. Francis Schaffer once said, "Christian love is our best apologetic." Do you believe this is true? What does this mean in practical terms?

If we send one message with our lips and another with our attitudes, which will speak more loudly?

4. Read 4:17-19. What is the relationship between love and fear? Why is this?

In what ways can fear motivate our obedience to Christ? Is this good or bad? Why?

5. Read 1 Cor. 3:10-15, 4:5 and 2 Cor. 5:10. These passages deal with the rewards of the believer. Does our motive for service seem to play a role in rewards? How so?

How does John's teaching help us to be properly motivated?

6. Read 4:20-21. Can we really know God if we don't know how to love others? Why or why not?

Is it possible to cultivate a concept of love beyond what you've experienced in this life? Why or why not?

Application

1. What 3 practical things can you do this Christmas season to focus on the true meaning of Christmas, as described by John?
2. Write the names of two people in your sphere of influence who don't know Christ. Ask God to help you love them in such a way that the truth of the Gospel becomes evident.
3. Ask God to search your heart to discover your motives for obedience. What can you do to develop positive motives for obedience? Brainstorm some ideas as a group.
4. Pray that God will help you to love as He loved you for all the reasons John has listed in his letter.