

## Module 16: 1 John 4:7-12 (Part 2)

### Group Exercise 1

List the similarities between verse 9 and verse 10.

### Group Exercise 2

List the differences between verse 9 and verse 10.

### Group Exercise 3

In verse 9, what do you learn about God's expression of love which he sent, specifically in the following areas?

1. Its nature
2. Its purpose
3. Its beneficiaries

### Group Exercise 4

Answer the same question as Exercise 3 for verse 10, instead of verse 9.

#### 1) Observations and Observational Questions that guide Interpretation

- a) Read 1 John 4:1-16 for context.
- b) What words do you see as important, either because they are repeated often or they are part of a key teaching in verses 4:7-12? **Love, God, one another, us.**
- c) What title do you suggest for the paragraph starting in verse 4:7? **Here are possible titles: "Love Like God"; "Love One Another".**
- d) Transition – links to previous verses
  - i) Love of God – its source (7-8)
  - ii) Love of God – its manifestation (9-10)
- e) Incarnation vs. Atonement
  - i) Several commentators say that verse 9 describes the incarnation (Christ becoming human flesh), while verse 10 describes the atonement (Christ being the sacrifice which reconciles God and man).
  - ii) What evidence is there and do you agree or disagree? (Refer to the Group Exercises above.)
  - iii) I think both verses touch on the incarnation and the atonement. They both include the following (Stott):
    - (1) Nature of God's gift (what He sent) – "only begotten Son"
    - (2) Purpose of God's gift – life (9), which requires a solution for our sin problem (10).
    - (3) Beneficiaries of God's gift – believers (we, us, beloved (7, 11)).
- f) "By this" and "In this"
  - i) Same Greek words at the beginning of verse 9 and verse 10, but sometimes translated differently.
    - (1) NASB: By this (9); In this (10)
    - (2) NIV: This is (9); This is (10)

- (3) KJV: In this (9); Herein (10)
- ii) “By this . . . that . . .” (9): Revelation of God’s love. God’s love was revealed by means of Him sending His Son.
  - iii) “In this . . . not that . . . but that . . .” (10): Essence of God’s love. God’s love was embodied in the sending of His Son.
- g) “love of God”
- i) This is the subjective genitive: God’s own love.
  - ii) It is not the objective genitive: God is the object of love, therefore meaning the “love for God”.
  - iii) It is not the descriptive genitive: God-like love.
- h) “was manifested”
- i) To make visible, make clear
  - ii) Previous to the incarnation, this love was not displayed in such a personal, dynamic manner. (Hiebert)
- i) “in us” – meaning the sphere in which the manifestation took place; among us.
- j) “has sent”
- i) Perfect tense – we now enjoy the abiding blessing of Christ being sent by the Father into the world.
  - ii) Compound verb, *apostello* – *apo* + *stello*; to send forth (*apo*, “off, away from”). Being sent forth as the representative of another.
- k) “His only begotten Son”
- i) *Monogenes* – *monos* (only, single) + *genos* (kind); uniqueness, one of a kind.
  - ii) Used for the Hebrew word for “well beloved” in the Septuagint (LXX).
  - iii) Refers to Christ in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9. See also Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38 and Hebrews 11:17 for the other uses of this word in the NT (not of Christ).
  - iv) Placed emphatically forward in word order.
  - v) Literally, “the Son of Him the only begotten”. The repeated article makes both designations prominent and distinct. This shows both Christ’s deity and His uniqueness. He has no equal and is able fully to reveal the Father. (Hiebert)
- l) “into the world” – Christ’s destination
- m) “so that we might live through Him”
- i) “so that”
    - (1) Purpose for God sending His Son.
    - (2) Implies that we were spiritually dead, but He came to give us life.
  - ii) “we might live”
    - (1) “we might come to live”, generally understood this way
    - (2) “we actually live”, regarded by Lenski
    - (3) (Aorist tense) declares the purpose of Christ’s mission as the actual bestowal of life with the resultant ongoing possession of eternal life. (Hiebert)
  - iii) “through Him”
    - (1) The Son Himself is the mediating agent of this bestowal of eternal life
    - (2) Imparted while people are here on earth. (Hiebert)

- iv) “It includes the removal of the sentence of death, the return of spiritual life of the soul, and the final enjoyment of eternal life in heaven” (Morgan)
- n) “In this is love, not that we loved God”
  - i) “In this is love”
    - (1) Looks forward to the explanation that follows
    - (2) This explanation includes both negative and (two) positive statements.
  - ii) “not that we loved God”
    - (1) “we” is emphatic. This emphasis highlights the contrast between sinful human beings and a loving God.
    - (2) “Fallen humanity is not naturally in love with the God whom the Son came to reveal. As such, we did not and could not express the love John is here talking about.” (Hiebert)
- o) “but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”
  - i) “He loved us”
    - (1) Emphatic “He Himself” continues the contrast between “we” and God.
    - (2) “He took the initiative in revealing His love. His love ‘was original and spontaneous, the source of all other love’”. (Hiebert, Bennett)
  - ii) “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”
    - (1) No verbal form connecting Son and propitiation in the Greek. Literally, “His Son a propitiation for our sins”
    - (2) Not merely the propitiator, like a high priest under Mosaic Law, but the propitiation, shedding His own blood.
  - iii) No explicit reference made to the Son’s death.
- p) What other observations do you see? (Words, grammar, construction, history, content, etc.)

## 2) Interpretation

The following is the means by which God’s love was made visible and clear among us, previous to this that love not being displayed in such a personal and dynamic manner. God has sent forth His well beloved Son, Who Himself is Deity and is one of a kind, out from His heavenly home and into the world as His Father’s representative, without equal and fully able to reveal the Father. God’s purpose is so that we might pass from death to life now with the resultant possession of eternal life, Christ being the agent.

The following is the essence of love. It is not that we ourselves loved God, for fallen humanity is not naturally in love with God and could not express self-sacrificing love. In contrast, God Himself took the initiative in revealing His original and spontaneous love and sent forth His Son. His purpose is so that His Son would be not merely the one who oversees God’s satisfaction with the sacrifice for our sins, but that His Son would be the one who is sacrificed, shedding His own blood.

## 3) Applications

- a) Specifically, in what way(s) do we “live” as a result of God’s revelation of His love (verse 9)?

- b) What is the most valuable item you have ever sacrificed for someone else? Try to imagine sacrificing your unique, one of a kind, well beloved child. For whom would you be willing to make this sacrifice?
- c) God did not wait for us to be lovable before initiating love toward us; love exudes from Him. Is this something we can imitate in our relationships with others? Specifically, with whom and in what ways?
- d) What other application do you have?