

Module 16: 1 John 4:7-12 (Part 3)

Group Exercise 1

Taking verses 7-12 as a unit, how would you fill in blanks?

- Love of God – its source (7-8)
- Love of God – its manifestation (9-10)
- Love of God – its _____ (11)
- Love of God – its _____ (12)

Group Exercise 2

Verse 11 has the phrase “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” in the NAS translation. Is this a “cause-effect” or an “evidence-inference” conditional phrase? (Please ask for an explanation of these types of conditional phrases, if necessary.)

Group Exercise 3

Verse 12 has the phrase “if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us” in the NAS translation. Is this a “cause-effect” or an “evidence-inference” conditional phrase? (Please ask for an explanation of these types of conditional phrases, if necessary.)

Group Exercise 4

Verse 12 begins with the phrase “No one has seen God at any time”. How does this statement fit in with the context of the paragraph (7-12)?

1) Observations and Observational Questions that guide Interpretation

- Read 1 John 4:1-16 for context.
- 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.**
- What title do you suggest for the paragraph starting in verse 4:7? **Here are possible titles: “Love Like God”; “Love One Another”.**
- Transition – links to previous verses
 - Beloved (2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, **11**)
 - Love one another (3:11, 23; 4:7, **11, 12**)
 - Paragraph development
 - Love of God – its source (7-8)
 - Love of God – its manifestation (9-10)
 - Love of God – its motivation (11)
 - Love of God – its perfection (12)
- “Beloved”
 - Sixth and last time in this epistle (2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, **11**)
 - No further direct address until the very last verse (5:21)
- “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”
 - “if”

- (1) Structurally, this is a 1st class conditional clause, because it uses *ei* + the indicative mood of the verb. This means that the author John believed the condition (God so loved us) to be true.
- (2) Semantically, this is a cause-effect conditional clause. This means that the effect of God's love is that we should love one another.
- ii) "so"
 - (1) *Houto* – in this manner, thus, so
 - (2) 1 John 2:6 is the other usage in this epistle – “in the **same** manner”
 - (3) “expresses both the manner, degree, and extent of God's love” (Hobbs)
- iii) “also”
 - (1) *Kai* – and, also, even, indeed, but
 - (2) In this verse it is strongly sequential, and can be translated “in turn” (Brown)
- iv) “ought”
 - (1) *Opheilo* – owe, owe money, be in debt for
 - (2) 3x in 1 John (2:6; 3:16, 4:11)
 - (3) “not the ‘must’ of external compulsion, but the inner constraint of conscious obligation” (Hiebert)
 - (4) “God's love for us is the example as well as the stimulus for our practice of mutual love. The reality of our love for God will be tested, strengthened, and purified by our practice of mutual love as believers. In keeping with the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 22:37-40), John insists that love for God and love for our brother cannot be separated.” (Hiebert)
- g) “No one has seen God at any time”
 - i) Consistency with other Scriptures
 - (1) God is spirit (John 4:24)
 - (2) God is invisible (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16)
 - (3) No one can see God and live (Exodus 33:20)
 - (4) No man has seen Him (20)
 - (5) OT theophanies were revelations of God in human disguise; not visions of God as He is in Himself. (Stott)
 - (6) The vision of God lies in the future when Christ appears (3:2)
 - (7) “No one has seen God at any time” (John 1:18)
 - (a) Identical words to verse 12 in the NAS
 - (b) Similar, but slightly different, in the Greek
 - ii) Christ reveals the Father to us
 - (1) “the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (John 1:18b)
 - (2) “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15)
- h) “if we love one another”
 - i) Structurally, this is a 3rd class conditional clause, because it uses *ean* + the subjunctive mood of the verb. This means that the author John believed the condition (we love one another) to be probable, but not necessarily true all the time.
 - ii) Semantically, this is an evidence-inference conditional clause. This means that we infer the “then” portion of the clause to be true when we see the

evidence of the “if” portion of the clause. Specifically, we know God abides in us and His love is perfected in us when we see us loving one another. It does not mean that we can urge God to abide in us if we love one another.

- i) “God abides in us” – God remains or dwells in us.
- j) “and His love is perfected in us”
 - i) “His love”, literally, “the love of Him”
 - (1) This is the subjective genitive: God’s own love.
 - (2) It is not the objective genitive: God is the object of love, therefore meaning the “love for God”.
 - (3) It is not the descriptive genitive: God-like love.
 - ii) “perfected”
 - (1) *Teleioo* – to make perfect, complete
 - (2) 4x in 1 John (2:5; 4:12, 17, 18) as a verb. Once (18) as an adjective.
 - (3) Always refers to “love” in 1 John
 - (4) “The perfect passive verb ‘is perfected’ does not imply any previous imperfection in God’s love but rather presents God’s love as having been brought to its goal objectively in that life.” (Hiebert)
 - iii) “The unseen God, who was once revealed in His Son, is now revealed in His people if and when they love one another. God’s love is seen in their love because their love is His love imparted to them by His Spirit (cf. verse 13). The words do not mean that when we begin to love, God comes to dwell in us, but the reverse. Our love for one another is evidence of God’s indwelling presence.” (Stott)
 - iv) This statement “is so daring that many commentators have been reluctant to accept it” and have suggested that *his love* is not ‘God’s love’, but ‘our love for God’ or ‘godlike love’. “But the whole paragraph is concerned with God’s love, and we must not stagger at the majesty of this conclusion.” (Stott)
- k) Summary of the paragraph 7-12
 - i) God’s Love
 - (1) Love of God – its source (7-8)
 - (2) Love of God – its manifestation (9-10)
 - (3) Love of God – its motivation (11)
 - (4) Love of God – its perfection (12)
 - ii) Love one another
 - (1) The requirement (7)
 - (2) The reasoning (11)
 - (3) The result (12)
- l) What other observations do you see? (Words, grammar, construction, history, content, etc.)

2) Interpretation

Beloved, my dear fellow believers in Christ, if God loved us in the manner just described, and I assert that this is true, then we in turn have an obligation to love fellow believers in mutual fashion in response to God’s initiation and example of love.

No living person has seen God ever. If we love our fellow believers in mutual fashion, and this is likely though not necessarily always the case, this gives evidence that God dwells in us and His love is made complete in us. That is, the unseen God, who we just learned was revealed in His Son when He came to earth, is now revealed in us, His followers who remain on earth, when we love one another.

3) Applications

- a) In a specific and personal way, what motivates you (verse 11) to love your fellow believer in Christ?
- b) If we do not love one another (verse 12), what are possible reasons? How do we correct this?
- c) How do you respond to the teaching that the love of God is revealed in us for others to see when we love one another? (Cf. John 13:35)
- d) What other application do you have?