

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Our Mission: Reaching Out to Leaders Who Can Change the World.

June 2016

True Christianity

INTRODUCTION

Why do you think God designed man to be a relational being? **Gen 1:27**

OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

Read 1 John 4:7-21

Note: Smalley provides three observations about John's description of God as love: 1) Its background is the Jewish (OT) understanding of God as living, personal, and active, rather than the Greek concept of deity which was abstract in character. 2) To assert comprehensively that "God is love" does not ignore or exclude the other attributes of his being to which the Bible as a whole bears witness: notably his justice and his truth. 3) There is a tendency in some modern theologies to transpose the equation "God is love" into the reverse, "Love is God." But this is not a Biblical idea. As John makes absolutely clear in verse 7, the controlling principle of the universe is not an abstract quality of "love," but a sovereign, living God who is the source of all love, and who (as love) himself loves (see vv. 7, 10, 19).^{112 1}

1. The New Testament talks about many kinds of love (**Matt 5:44; 22:37-38; Jn 14:15**, etc.), but according to John, how does someone obtain perfect and complete love? Vs 7
2. What is a potential test to determine if someone is a Christian? Vs 8; 17, 20-21 What if it doesn't work?
3. Why does John extol Christ's death rather than his birth? Vs 10
4. How do verses 8-15 show the relationships in the Trinity?

Note: In exhibiting the unity between the members of the Trinity, the Word of God in no way denies the simultaneous existence and distinctiveness of each of the three persons of the Godhead. In other words, God is one God (not three), but the one God is a Trinity of persons. The New Testament clearly distinguishes three persons who are all simultaneously active. They are not merely modes or manifestations of the same person (as the heresies of Modalism or Sabellianism and the more modern Oneness theology incorrectly assert) who sometimes act as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Spirit. For example, at Christ's baptism (Matt. 3:16-17), all three persons were simultaneously active with the Son being baptized, the Spirit descending, and the Father speaking from heaven.²

5. John (Vv 13, 17) and Paul (**Rom 8:16**) say that we have been given the gift of his Spirit which should give us confidence that we are part of God's family. What might prevent us from accepting or feeling that relationship with the Spirit?
6. What is the value of a public confession of the incarnate Christ (Jesus)? Vs 15 **Rom 10: 9-11; Matt 10:32** What does that look like in your spiritual environment?
7. If fear has to do with punishment, how can love dispel it? Vs 18

APPLICATION

Love isn't just a nice thing to do, but a command. Vs 20 **Mk 12:31** How can you love your brother with God's complete, mature love? **John 13:35; Matt 5:48**

¹¹² Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 239-40.

¹ Akin, D. L. (2001). *Vol. 38: 1, 2, 3 John* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (178). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² MacArthur, J. (2007). *1, 2, 3 John : MacArthur NT Commentary* (162-163). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.