



# The Good News

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## Love

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It doesn't take much study of God's Word to quickly realize that love is a rather important and central concept to God. 1 John 4:8 and also 4:16 tell us that He is, in fact, love itself. For a Christian young or old, 1 John 4 is a very good place to start when trying to gain a firm grasp on how God views love, how He views those who show love to others and those who don't—and what it means for us. 1 Cor 13:1-3 tells us the consequences of actions taken, even those actions that God has commanded us to do, without love being the motivating force behind those actions. Even faith enough to move mountains, we are told, is worthless if it is not matched with love for others.

So what does it mean for us to have love? To begin with, there is a benefit that is provided us when we have love perfected in us: we no longer have cause to experience fear. He tells us in 1 John 4:18 that, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment and the one who fears is not perfected in love." What have we to fear if we are perfected in love? What is the point of being perfected in love? Jump up two verses to 4:16 and we see the answer. In perfecting ourselves in love, we abide in God, and He abides in us. We can KNOW God. On the other end, we are also told in the 8<sup>th</sup> verse of the same chapter that if we do not love, then we do not and **cannot** know God. Indeed, it is not a difficult conclusion to reach: if God is love, as He established in His Word, and we do not love, how can we know God? To truly understand our God, we must learn to love the way He loves us.

If there is still difficulty in understanding exactly the nature of love, then the other question can be asked: what **isn't** love? We go to the well-known passage of 1 Cor 13:4-13 for the answer. We are told that love is patient. Then love is not impatient. What causes impatience? Desire. Where is desire devel-

oped? Within our own minds and hearts. Then we can say that love is not dependent upon our own desires. We're told that love is kind. Then love does not show unkindness to others. What causes us to wish to show unkindness to others? Our own desires. Love doesn't envy. Where is envy germinated? Within our own hearts, through the temptations placed before us. What is envy? It is the desire to possess that which does not belong to us. At this point, the reader can see where this is going. We then must look at the nature of desire. It is important to point out that not all desires are contrary to love, as Christians have a desire to serve and please God. However, there is one quality that depends upon our own desires: selfishness. It is this that we need to recognize as the antithesis of love because to understand love and to perfect it in ourselves is to also understand its opposite and to shed all aspects of its nature from our hearts.

How do we know we are perfected in love? Reading 1 Cor 13:4-13 is a good way to identify what perfected love "looks" like. We can do that both by studying the passage and asking ourselves how much we are like the verses that describe love itself, and we can also ask ourselves how many of our motivations are selfish. We know love is selfless, in fact, it is God's definition of selflessness, so we can know that removing selfishness from our lives and from our hearts removes the stumbling blocks that otherwise litter our path to attempting to perfect love in ourselves—and thereby abiding in God.