

Know Love

1 John 4:7-8

Dr. Paul Cannings

A. The Source (vs. 7):

1. Beloved – John is writing to believers he once served as a pastor in a tender manner. These believers are ‘dearly beloved.’
 - a) The love with which children of God should love one another is the *agapē* (ἀγαπη) love which God is in His nature, the love which is produced by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the yielded saint, the love which was seen in action at the Cross, and the love whose constituent elements are defined for us in I Corinthians 13.
2. Let us love – Loving one another is to continuously demonstrate compassion, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, for the needs of each other no matter the sacrifice or commitment it demands. It is not talk, it is love in action (1 John 3:18).
 - a) Challenge the believers to love one another is something John repeats often (3:11, 23; 4:7,11,12).
 - b) To not serve the needs of another is to hate (3:17) another believer (murderer, lives in darkness, abides in death, and is of the devil 2:9-10; 3:10, 14, 15) which means they do not have an experience of God that leads to a complete understanding of God’s desires (2:3-5; the person did not get to know God) because God by His very nature produces love.
 - c) We know from 3:18 (see also 4:9) that John is concerned with love in action, rather than with “love” in the abstract. It is likely, therefore, that when he speaks about everyone who is “loving” (ἀγαπῶν), he means not only an *attitude* of love (or being loving) but also the *practice* of love. Such love, John maintains, is the test and criterion both of being regenerate and knowing God (cf. Law, *Tests*, 398). ^[1]

3. Love – Love in its pure form is a deliberate act of obedience to God as it relates to other people whether they are believers or not (John 13:34-35; Matthew 5:43-48; 22:36-40). This is a benevolent love. It is to obey God as the word directs a believer to relate to the needs of another.
4. Is – Since God is love and love originates from God, and find its source of strength from God, that is continuous and never ending, love can never fail (1 Corinthians 13:8). This is why love is spiritual and is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).
5. From God – God is supreme and sovereign.
 - a) ‘Love is from God’ (4:7); ‘God is love’ (4:8); ‘love of God is manifested’ (4:9); He loves us first (4:10).
6. Everyone who loves – This is everyone who continuously and habitually demonstrate compassion, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, for the needs of each other no matter the sacrifice or commitment it demands. It is not talk, it is love in action (1 John 3:18).
 - a) We know from 3:18 (see also 4:9) that John is concerned with love in action, rather than with “love” in the abstract. It is likely, therefore, that when he speaks about everyone who is “loving” (ἀγαπῶν), he means not only an *attitude* of love (or being loving) but also the *practice* of love. Such love, John maintains, is the test and criterion both of being regenerate and knowing God (cf. Law, *Tests*, 398).^[2]
7. Is born – The person whose love is inspired by God demonstrates that they have been completely transformed by the Holy Spirit into the divine nature of God (2 Corinthians 5:17).
8. Is born – To be born again is to be completely changed from the inside out so that a believer is influenced to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This believer now has the ability to demonstrate characteristics that is representative of Christ. This person cannot repeated live in sin (1 John 3:4-10).

- a) Reference has already been made to the believer as one who is “born of God” (2:29; 3:9; see also 5:1, 4, 18; and cf. 3:24; 4:13, 16), and “knows God” (2:3–4, 13–14; 3:1, 6; 4:6; see also 4:8; and cf. 5:20). This is the only place in 1 John where these two ideas are combined. The present tense of γινώσκει (“knows”) suggests the thought of a relationship with God which is not only intimate but also continuing (contrast the aorist, ἔγνων, in v 8).^[3]

9. Knows – A person that is born again lives continuously under the influence of the Holy Spirit and can therefore clearly understand all that God is directing them to do. This leads to an intimate experience of how God’s Word is applied on a daily basis.

- a) Love stems from a regenerate nature and also from fellowship with God which issues in knowing Him (see 2:3–5). The absence of love is evidence that a person does not know God. Significantly, John did not say such a person is not born of God. In the negative statement only the last part of the positive one (in 4:7) is repeated. Since God is love, intimate acquaintance with Him will produce love. Like light (1:5), love is intrinsic to the character and nature of God, and one who is intimately acquainted with God walks in His light (1:7).^[4]
- b) Challenge the believers to love one another is something John repeats often (3:11, 23; 4:7,11,12).

10. Knows – This is a person that can see through the issues before them because they understand how to apply God Word to daily issues. This is why this person walks in the light (1 John 1:5-7). This is why believers who experience God daily have fellowship with one another (Ephesians 5:21 – a husband and wife living under the direction of the Holy Spirit submits to one another but in the flesh there is a need for structure to maintain order).

- a) John rounded out his test of truth regarding knowledge of God (3:14, 16, 19, 21, 24; 4:13, 17–18). He had already made the point that one must walk in the light, confess sin, keep God’s commands, and love like Christ. At this point he added one more aspect: the true definition and motivation for love.^[5]

The false teachers had redefined love according to the lusts of the world (2:15–16; 3:12). First John 4:7–21 contains John’s classic exposition on the nature of love. Since God is love, the believer who is begotten by God should be characterized by the same kind of sacrificial love (4:7). The supreme manifestation of God’s love was the giving of his unique Son that believers might enjoy life, both abundant and eternal, in him (4:9).^[6]

B. Choose Love (vs. 8):

1. The one who does not love – This is a person who does not continuously demonstrate compassion, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, for the needs of each other no matter the sacrifice or commitment it demands. It is not talk, it is love in action (1 John 3:18).
2. Does not know – The person who does not love once for all cannot clearly understand all that God is directing them to do because they walk in darkness (1 John 2:9-10; 3:10, 15; 4:20).
3. God – God all by Himself, completely powerful and sovereign, independent of all things is the very nature of love.
 - a) “God” has the article, the word “love” does not, which construction in Greek means that the two words are not interchangeable. The absence of the article emphasizes nature, essence, character. The translation should read, “God as to His nature is love.” That is, God is a loving God. It is His nature to be loving.^[7]
4. Is – Since God is love and love originates from God, and find its source of strength from God, that is continuous and never ending, love can never fail (1 Corinthians 13:8). This is why love is spiritual and is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).
5. Love – God sovereignly defines and directs how believers relate to each to each other’s needs. When believers submit to God’s rule in their lives and follow His direction love is manifested and it exposes God’s nature in them (John 13:34-35; Matthew 5:43-48; 22:36-40).

- a) The word “God” has the article, the word “love” does not, which construction in Greek means that the two words are not interchangeable. The absence of the article emphasizes nature, essence, character. The translation should read, “God as to His nature is love.” That is, God is a loving God. It is His nature to be loving.^[8]
- b) The third of John’s three great statements concerning the nature of God (Jn 4:24; I Jn 1:5). The absence of the article (God is *the* love) indicates that love is not simply a quality which God possesses, but love is that which he is by his very nature. Further, because God is love, love which he shows is occasioned by himself only and not by any outside cause. The word God is preceded by an article, which means that the statement is not reversible; it cannot read, “Love is God.”^[9]

6. Love – Love from God is to be in love with God.

^[1] Smalley, S. S. (1989). *1, 2, 3 John* (Vol. 51, pp. 237–238). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

^[2] Smalley, S. S. (1989). *1, 2, 3 John* (Vol. 51, pp. 237–238). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

^[3] Smalley, S. S. (1989). *1, 2, 3 John* (Vol. 51, pp. 237–238). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

^[4] Walvoord, J. F., & Zuck, R. B., Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 898–899). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^[5] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 711). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^[6] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 711). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^[7] Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Jn 4:6-7

^[8] Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Jn 4:6-7

^[9] Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (Eds.). (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.