



BARNES *on the Bay*

September 12, 2022

John's first epistle shows that a believer's testimony must agree in speech and action. In doing so, John provides three tests of one's communion with God: obedience, love, and truth. In this second devotional from 1 John we consider the second of these tests: love.

SCRIPTURAL MEDITATION: 1 John 3:18, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

DEVOTIONAL: "God, Others, and the World: The Tests of Love"

In the Epistle of 1 John, some form of the word "love" appears thirty-one times: essentially, one of every three verses in this short book addresses this valuable subject. And, in love's application, John summarizes its practicality by saying, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Throughout 1 John, three areas related to love emerge.

TEST QUESTION 1: "DO YOU LOVE GOD?"

Undeniably, this book reveals that love comes from the Lord and that our ability to love God also comes from Him. John says, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). He goes further to explain it this way, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). The Lord, therefore, reveals where love

originates and how it is exemplified through Him. And if we are children of our Heavenly Father, we will also embody the spiritual heritage from which we have been born. John reveals, then, that "love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). Love—a supreme love such as God's—is that which we will find only in the Lord and empowered within us through Him. This love is not merely a warm, fuzzy feeling we have about God. Inspired and energized by the Lord, this love leads us to give ourselves to Him and His interests. The first test of our godly love reveals a genuine life of sacrifice for God Himself.

QUESTIONS
TESTS OF LOVE

1- **A** B C D

2- A B C **D**

3- A **B** C D

4- A **B** C D

5- A B **C** D

6- **A** B C D

TEST QUESTION 2: "DO YOU LOVE OTHERS?"

The second test of Christian love concerns our relationship with others. John says such love is vital: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

The natural question arises, "Who is my brother?" The broad teaching of Scripture is that love extends to all people, even enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35). But in the context of 1 John, the "brother" certainly concerns fellow believers. This follows the teachings of Jesus that believers reveal their godly identity as Christians show their love for one another. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

The importance of this cannot be understated because its actual exercise confirms one as obedient to God's Word, as being in Christ, and as assured of eternal life (1 John 2:5, 3:14). As one's love for God is not merely a warm feeling of appreciation, neither is such love for fellow believers. It goes further to coming alongside those of like faith with appreciation, understanding, care, protection, support, and sacrifice. Brethren might not always agree, but they will love one another.

TEST QUESTION 3: "DO YOU LOVE THE WORLD?"

The believer's relationship to the world appears in 1 John 2:14-15. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." These verses show a conflict between one's relationship with the Father and the world. But doesn't John 3:16 show that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son"? Where then is the conflict between the world and the Father?

John's use of "the world" in 1 John speaks of the system dedicated to opposing and taking the place of God. Satan directs this world-oriented system, and his purpose from the onset has been to displace and replace God. Therefore, for one to love the "world" in this way is to love all that would lead to the Father's demise (if such were even possible). John further explains what comprises the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These three areas also encompass the temptations presented to Eve in the Garden of Eden and Christ in the wilderness. Loving that which is godly—and not worldly—is the third test of the believer's love.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: Read all of 1 John in one sitting (it won't take long), especially looking for all the verses speaking of love. Mark and meditate the verses that speak to your heart about your relationship to God, fellow believers, and the world. All the while, keep in mind that the genuineness of our love will be revealed as it is 1) directed away from the world, 2) devoted to God, and 3) dedicated to others.