

CORE COMPETENCIES

Core Beliefs

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- **Personal God**
“I believe that God enables me to do things I could not or would not do otherwise.”
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

Core Practices

- Worship
- Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility

By now in our study of John’s first letter, there is no missing the fact that we are called and commanded by God to love each other. Not that we were unclear about that before, but John has left no doubt, ambiguity or wiggle room for any of us. But that really then leads us to the obvious question: “How?” How do we love people with our own limited internal resources? How do we love those who are difficult to love? How do we love those we would rather not even be around? How do we really do this? John is ready to help us answer that question, so let’s dig into this passage and see the answer he directs us to.

Learning to love better,

Richard Gotthardt, Pastor of Spiritual Formation

If you are new to using the Engage:

There is a short guide that will give you the “Who, Why, What, and How” of using the *Engage* study Guide. You may access it through the Grace Community Church website at (www.gracecommunityaz.org). (Access the Spiritual Formation Ministry page and click “Resources” on the left panel.)

Review from last week’s study of 1 John 3:11-24:

Last week we observed the continuation of John’s description of two family characteristics that are evident in the children of God. A child of God will be readily recognizable by his love for his brother—a love that is patterned after the example of Jesus’ love as He laid down His very life for us. This type of love does not exist only in our words, but it manifests itself in our actions and sacrifice to meet the needs of a brother. By this love, our heart is assured that we are of the truth! Those who keep His commandments (believing in His Son Jesus Christ and loving our brother) and do the things that are pleasing in His sight have confidence before Him to ask and receive. We can know we abide in Him and He abides in us as His Holy Spirit empowers us to keep His commandments.

Memory Verse for this week

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

1 John 4:10-11

Day 1 (1 John 4:7-21)

Begin your time in God’s Word, thanking Him for His love. Tell Him it is your desire to abide in His love and to manifest that love through your life as you live in the power of His Holy Spirit. Ask Him to reveal to you through His word a more perfect understanding and implementation of loving your brother in accordance with His command.

In previous weeks we have studied the first six verses of 1 John 4. This week’s study time will be concentrated in verses 7-21. Read through these verses as you would a letter you are receiving for the first time. How would you summarize in one short sentence the major theme of this passage?

Remember as we did an overview of the book of 1 John, we determined that the author's purpose for writing this letter was that we might know we have eternal life. Read through these verses once more and mark every occurrence of the word **know**. If you have been regularly using the Engage, add to your list what you observe concerning What You Can Know and How You Can Know It. If this is your first time using the Engage, simply take another piece of paper and divide it into two columns (titled as above). Then add your observations to this list.

Engaging with the Greek¹

Two Greek words translated *know* or *known* appear a total of 29 times in the book of 1 John. The first, *ginosko* occurs 23 times in the book of 1 John and is used exclusively in our passage this week.

Ginosko can be defined as knowledge grounded on personal experience. Each time it appears in 1 John 4:7-21, it is in the indicative mood, which declares a statement of fact, something which is true with certainty.

¹Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G3306). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

According to your observations, what does everyone who is born of God know or experience?

When you reflect on the fact that God declares in His Word to you, the certainty of this experience to those He calls His children, what fills your heart and mind?

Now read through the verses again, marking every reference to *God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit*. After marking, add to your list everything that answers one of the 5W's and an H about God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

Go back over your list. Circle every time you wrote the word love in your listings. Meditate on the truths you see included in these facts. Indicate what you learn about love as it relates to God.

Spend some additional time soaking in the truth God is love and love is from God. He is the only and the all-sufficient source for love. Spend time with your Heavenly Father. Allow His love to flood every fiber of your being.

Day 2 (1 John 4:7-21, Romans 5:5-10)

Read or recite your memory verse. Begin your study time in prayer to a Heavenly Father who is the only source of love. Last week we looked at the two different Greek words translated as *love* in this book. The book of 1 John contains these two words 46 times, and 27 of those occurrences are in our passage this week! Review the box below. Then read one more time through the passage. Mark each time the word *love* is used.

Engaging the Greek:

The Greek verb **agapao** (used in 1 John) means to esteem, indicating a direction of the will and finding one's joy in something or someone. It differs from another Greek word for love (phileo), which indicates feelings, warm affection, or the kind of love expressed by a kiss. Most scholars agree that agapao is used of God's love toward man and vice versa.

Each time the verb love appears in this text and refers to the need for us to love one another, it is in the present tense and active voice. This means that the subject (we) produces the action, and the action is to be continuous and ongoing, a pattern of life.

In 1 John 3:16 and 17 the Greek word translated **love** is the noun **agape**. It is defined as affectionate regard, good will or benevolence. With reference to God's love, it is God's willful direction toward man. It involves God doing what He knows is best for man and not necessarily what man desires. For example, John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave." What did He give? Not what man wanted, but what God knew man needed, i.e., His Son to bring forgiveness to man.¹

Add to your list on love, those things that answer one of the "5 W's and an H" ("who, what, when, where, why, or how"). Which verses reiterate that God is the source of love?

Who is the object of His love?

How did His love become manifested or shown to us?

God is the source of love and we are the object of His love, but why would God love us? Read the following passages from Scripture and record what our state was when God first loved us.

Romans 5:6-10:

According to **Romans 5:1-5**, when we gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand (salvation), what else did you receive?

The verb in **Romans 5:5** "poured out" is in the perfect tense, which indicates that the action was completed in the past with results that continue in the present. How would that deepen your understanding?

If God poured out His love in my life when I was anything but loveable and His love towards us is the pattern for our love towards one another, what does this type of love require from you toward your brother?

How does Romans 5:5 help to explain 1 John 4:13?

What is God showing to you about His love and the love He desires you to show to others? Record any insights or stirrings in your heart.

¹Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G26). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

DAY 3 (1 John 4:7-21, various New Testament passages)

Read or recite your memory verse. Begin your time in His Word once again coming before Him in humble dependence for understanding, application, and the desire and power to walk in obedience.

Another key word that appears repeatedly in this passage is *perfect(ed)* [NIV: *made complete*]. Read through the core passage and mark this word(s) in a distinctive way. Below, make a list of how love is mentioned in each verse that uses this word.

Now read through the Engaging the Greek box below. Take the meaning back to your answer above and paraphrase what you observe God is trying to convey to you about His love.

Engaging the Greek

The Greek verb, *teleioo*, translated *perfected* [*made complete*] is used in verse 12, 17, and 18 of 1 John 4. It means to complete, to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, or bring to an end, fulfillment or intended goal. It does not include the idea of faultlessness.

To complete, make perfect by reaching the intended goal. Particularly with the meaning to bring to a full end, completion, reaching the intended goal, to finish a work or duty (John 4:34; 5:36) ²

The Greek adjective, *teleios*, translated *perfect* in 1 John 4:18 includes the meaning of being brought to its end, finished, lacking nothing necessary to completeness. It gives a picture of something that is full grown, adult, of full age, or mature. ³

As we reflect on the intended goal of God's love in us, look up and read the following cross references and observe what the examples of Christ and the apostles show you about God's desire for your life?

John 4:34:

John 5:36 :

John 17:4:

Philippians 3:12:

2 Corinthians 12:9:

James 2:22:

1 John 2:5-6

From these cross references as well as our passage in 1 John 4, summarize what God wants you to know and implement in your life as it regards the fulfillment of His will for His children.

²Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G5048). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

³Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G5046). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

DAY 4 (1 John 4:7-21)

Read or recite your memory verse. As you begin today, thank your Heavenly Father for His desire to work not only in you but through you to manifest true love to a hurting and watching world.

Today, read through our core passage again, marking each time the word *abide* [*lives in*] appears. This word and concept are key to understanding and applying the truths of 1 John to our lives. Record what you learn about abiding from this passage on your separate list on *abide*. If this is your first time using the Engage, simply take a separate piece of paper and record everything you observe that would answer a who, what, when, where, why, or how question (5 W's and an H) about abiding.

Read the box below and reflect on these insights as they relate to our text. State as simply as possible what you believe God desires for you to understand about abiding.

Engaging with the Greek²

Abide [*remain, live in*]: speaks to the relation in which one person or thing stands with another. It is used chiefly in John's writings to indicate remaining united in heart, mind and will. To remain or abide in something or someone indicates steadfastness and perseverance.

²Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G3306). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

1 John 4:21 states very clearly that God commands His children to love one another. From what you have seen during this series on 1 John, is this a commandment that we are by nature able to obey? Give reason for your answer.

If we cannot on our own walk in obedience to this command, why do you think God would give it to us?

Read carefully 1 John 4:17-18, 1 John 2:28 and 1 John 3:19-24. Here in chapter 4, John once again explores a variety of possible responses in God's presence. He uses contrasting words like confidence vs. shame; confidence vs. condemns; confidence and perfect love vs. fear and punishment. What more do you think God wants you to see about love within the context of future judgment?

Once again in 1 John 4:20-21 we see the phrase, "If someone says," and the pronouncement when our actions do not back up our words, we are liars. If you have been consistently studying with us through 1 John, see if you can find those previous passages that draw a similar contrast.

1 John 4:19 is just about the shortest verse in the entire book of 1 John and yet is incredibly profound as you reflect on its truth in the context of chapter 4. If you agree, write down your reasoning.

Day 5 (1 John 4:7-21)

The Core Competency that we will reflect on this week is the belief in a **Personal God**. Our creed says, “I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.”

Psalms 121—A Song of ascents. “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip —He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm —He will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

The four statements listed below are ones that you can use to assess your own personal Christian experience.

1. I believe that God has a purpose for my life.
2. I believe that pain and suffering can often bring me closer to God.
3. I believe that God is actively involved in my life.
4. I believe that God enables me to do things I could not or would not otherwise do.

As you take time to reflect on this core competency, the creed, the supporting Scripture passage and the personal assessment statements, how has God used your time in His Word this week to transform your thinking so that you can prove what the will of God is... that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2)?

What have you seen about your ability to love in the way you are commanded to?

Mankind is perishing for need of love. Without love a man, a woman and a child only exists— with love, they live! Life and love are synonymous. We have seen there is only one place that either can be found—in God through Christ.

This week we have searched out the truths of love not so we would merely have a better or more thorough understanding, but so we would be able to walk as He walked—so that the pattern of our thinking and very actions would be changed! Our constant prayer should be that God would **use us to love others for Him**. How desperately the people all around us need to be loved! How can we, the children of God, withhold this love when it is ours to give freely?

Source unknown