

## 1John 4:11-21 We love because he first loved us

### 1. Love has lost its meaning...

Love has lost its meaning. That's right, I've said it. Love has lost its meaning.  
That is, the word love has become so misused, so abused, that it now means almost anything.  
I put the word 'love' into Google, and got back 25 billion hits.  
I put the word 'love' into songlyrics.com and got back 1000 songs.  
I put the word 'love' into dictionary.com, and got back 27 definitions.

How can one word have 27 different meanings? And how can you tell which meaning is being used?  
Even more, when it comes to relationships in our society what is meant by love?

Nowadays, you meet someone via a dating app, you date them, you move in together,  
you have children together, and then you get married,  
Oh, and at some point in that process, you declare "I love you", whatever you mean,  
And if the relationship falls apart, or you find someone more to your liking,  
Then you say "I don't love you", or "I've fallen out of love"  
or the nicer version, "it's not you, it's me".

I think that I'm standing on pretty solid evidence when I say love has lost its meaning...

And yet, and yet, we need to re-claim, and re-define love from this abyss of meaningless.  
Even more, we need to come back to God's Word, and see how God defines love,  
Even better, we need to come back to God's word and see how God demonstrates this love.

So, as we turn to this next section in John, the word that stands front and centre is "love".  
But we need to anchor what John means by love in the text  
John anchors love in two very different ways.

First, John anchors love in history. There is a past, present and future to love.

Second, John anchors love in Christ and the Christian community.

Notice, though, love is demonstrated not in feeling, but in action.

That is, Love is verb not a noun. Love is primarily about 'doing', not primarily about 'feeling'

<< Explain – Playing guitar – chord is made up of three notes

- Chord progression is when you put series of three notes together
- So John, in this section plays two chords about love
- But each chord is made up of three doing words, three actions. >>

## 2. Love, seeing & Abiding (vv. 11-16)

So, let's look at the first set of 'doing' words about love - **loving, seeing and abiding** << vv. 11>>

### i) **Love in the past, love in the present (v. 11)**

John starts in the past, in the events of history in v. 11.

God acted in history defining love in sending his son. Remember v. 9 << v. 9>>

God acted by revealing, by manifesting his love in Jesus' death for us.

Because God loved in such an extraordinary fashion, in such a revolutionary manner,

Therefore we are compelled, we are driven to love each other in the same way.

God's love demonstrated in past history necessarily impacts our love for each other in the present.

God's love in the past, our love in the present.

### ii) **Love in the present, abide in the present (vv. 12-13)**

The second set of 'doing words' is: God's **love** for us in the present,  
and God **abides** with us in the present. << read vv. 12-13 >>

Notice, this is all based on love for each other in v. 12.

That is, if we love each other in the present, then God abides/remains/dwells with us,  
AND God's love is perfected in us.

Now, God's love being perfected doesn't mean without flaw/ without error,

God's love being perfected does mean being brought to completion, achieving its goal.

God's love has reached the final destination of its purpose – that is our dwelling with God.

And we know this has come about, has reached its goal because God has given us his Spirit,

God's love is completed not because of our own efforts, our own strength or will,

But because God is working in us through his Spirit to bring make his love complete.

### iii) **Seen in the past, love & abide in the present (vv. 14-16)**

The third set of doing words adds the extra dimension of 'seeing'. << read vv. 14-16>>

The Apostles have 'seen' and testify to the past action of God in sending Jesus.

In stark contrast to v. 12 – emphasis of word order – “God no one has ever beheld

Now, the apostles have seen, and the apostles bear witness.

On this basis, whoever confesses Jesus is the Son of God has changed reality in the present.

The present reality of confessing Jesus as the Son of God means God dwells with you now.

### 3. Love, confidence & fear (vv. 17-21)

The second chord for John's love song is made up of the notes – love, confidence and fear.  
And this second chord builds upon the first. << read v. 17 >>

#### i) *Love & confidence in the present (v. 17)*

Love & confidence make up the first note. We have love, and this love is perfected in us.  
But how is this love perfected in us? How is it brought to completion?  
Well, it is brought to completion in the confidence, the boldness that we have on the last day.  
We can have total confidence of standing on that final day,  
Because the love of God will be brought to its completion.

But what is the basis of this confidence on the final day? How can we have such boldness?  
Because as Jesus, literally, that one, is, so we are in the world.  
Our confidence has nothing to do with us, and everything to do with Jesus.

Love leads to confidence because of what Jesus has done, because of who Jesus is.

#### ii) *Love & fear in the present (v. 18)*

And therefore, the second note is the dissonant, discordant note of fear. << v. 18 >>  
The 'perfected' love is not 'flawless', not 'pure without blemish', but rather completed, mature,  
And so, completed love drives out fear, because if you have that completed love  
Then you have total confidence of your future on the last day,  
And if you have total confidence of your future on the last day, then there is nothing to fear.

Now, this lack of 'fear' is not the irrational jump out of planes, sky diving, bungy jumping, no fear.  
This fear relates to the daunting reality of standing before the God on judgment day.  
This fear is the sum of all fears,  
because there is nothing more fearful than the creator of the universe  
calling us to account of the life that we've lived.

And yet, if you know the love of God, then you have total confidence on the last day,  
And therefore you have nothing to fear.

#### iii) *Love in the past, love in the present (vv. 19-21)*

The third note in this chord is simply love. << vv. 19-21 >>

God, past tense, loved us, v. 19.

It's like we sitting in a helicopter, looking down on the activity of God,  
And this is the action played out before us – God loved us.

Therefore we, present tense, love one another.

More specifically, we love not only in lip-service, but we love deeply from the heart, v. 20.

For there is no room for hatred when it comes to loving your brother or sister.

Hatred is incompatible with the confession 'I love God'.

John's logic is straight forward in v. 20,

If you can not love your brother, who you can see,  
Then how can you love God, who you can not see?

Now, let's be clear, here about the kind of hatred we're talking about.

For there is a place for hatred in the life of the Christian.

We should hate sin, and our sinful nature.

We should hate seeing the devastating effects of sin in this world.

We should hate seeing the name of Jesus being taken lightly, or profanely, or disdainfully.

We should hate the lies of the Devil that work so well in a world rebelling against God.

But we must never hate our Christian brother or sister.

We must never hate any member God's family.

Even though they might offend us, they might wrong us, they might hurt us.

We must never hate each other.

Rather, we must remember v. 19. We love because he first loved us.

#### 4. We love because he first loved us

Well, what can we say about love?

What can we say about love, in an age where love has lost its meaning?

John gives us a love song, unlike any of the love song.

For John tells of a love unlike any kind of romantic love we croon over.

John's love song is ground in the reality of history.

John's love song is ground in the reality of God demonstrating his love.

John's love song is ground in the objective reality of God's love.

And John plays two simple chords with three powerful notes

First chord - Love, see, abide, second chord - love, confidence, fear.

First chord – For God so loved us, we ought we love each other.

- therefore we love each other and we abide in him.

- and we abide because we know and believe what the apostles saw.

Second chord – God's love is completed in us, when we have confidence on the last day.

- And when God's love is completed in us, we will have no fear on that day.

These two chords make up the greatest love song in history:

The title of the greatest love song in history is v. 19 – We love because he first loved us.

Let's pray.