

1st John 4:7-12

7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

There are a handful of major themes in the Bible: covenant, obedience, unity, grace, love, and others. The point I want to make is that love is a major theme of the Bible. To love one another is a biblical mandate. God's love is the basis of salvation because out of love God sent us Jesus and out of love God forgives our sins. Love one another is not just a biblical mandate – it is a commandment from Jesus. Love is emphasized in the Bible because of its importance. Love is necessary for the life of the church. God loves you for who you are, as you are, as opposed to loving you for what you think God, or someone else, expects you to be.

In the Scripture, John doesn't just repeat the commandment to love one another, he demonstrates its significance. Whoever does not love does not know God. God's love is revealed to us in a very specific way – through God's Son. The love of God is revealed through God's action by sending the Son to the world to atone for our sins. There is a specific quality to God's love. It does not stop with God giving love to you and me, and then we give love back to God, it is extended to us loving others. The Scripture is specific. If we love one another, God lives in us and God's love is perfected in us. God explicitly desires for us to love others. If we truly love God, we love what God loves and God loves the people of God's creation. The relationship between God and humanity is elevated significantly when we demonstrate this love by sharing it with others. God abides in those who confess Jesus is the Son of God and this abiding relationship is based on love. The commandment we have is that those who love God must also love others. God loves you for who you are as opposed to loving you for what you think God wants you to be. We are to do likewise. We are to love others for who they are as opposed to loving them for who we think they should be or what we think they should be doing.

A good number of people give up a life of faith due to hypocrisy. They hear the word proclaimed but fail to see it from these who proclaim it. We are not to judge others; we are to show them the love of God alive within us. Whenever I read the Bible, I see God's love. It is everywhere in the Bible. As you read, reread, and study the Bible, God's love is revealed to you and you grow closer to God. God lives in us and God's love lives in us, we become known by our love as the love of God is living within us. Some of us may come to faith by doctrine or theology, but typically we come to faith because the people of God make the love of God visible to us through them. The love of God comes to us from someone that loves us for who we are as opposed to loving us for who they want us to be.

The season of Lent is thought of as a time of waiting and anticipation as we marvel at the glory of God and what God has done for us. We anticipate the Good News

that he is raised from the grave. However, Lent is more than that, Lent is a matter of being ready as we set time aside for prayer, Bible study, and outreach. We are to follow Jesus. We need to really tune in to what Jesus is all about. We are to honestly and sincerely be like him and love others as he loves others. If we truly love Jesus we will love others like Jesus loves others. We all need someone to love us for who we are, as we are. This is God's love. God loves us as we are and we share God's love to others by loving them and accepting them as they are.