

How Do You Love Someone You've Never Seen?

1 John 4:12-5:2

We've all heard about love at first sight.

We've also heard discussion about blind dates

–when you've never met the person you're going to go out with.

Some people have sworn off blind dates, because you're never sure what you're going to end up with

–no matter how good a friend sets you up!

How about love *without* sight?

There's certainly more than one kind of sight

–you can “see” what a person is like, even if you can't physically *SEE* them!

Some people who can't see physically see more about what a person is like than people who see them well!

But what if you can't see them at all?

Can we truly love someone we've never seen?

That question is a critical part of John's argument about our love for one another.

How can we claim to love God,

Whom we've never seen,

when we can't get along with the family of God that we do see everyday?

GOD'S HOLINESS 1:5-3:10

God is holy. 1:5

To enjoy fellowship with a holy God, we must be holy!

GOD'S LOVE 3:11-5:10

God is love. 4:8

To enjoy fellowship with a God who IS love, we must love one another.

=> **Exhortation to Love 4:7-11**

Since God has loved us, when we don't deserve it, John exhorts us to love one another.

Results of Love 4:12-18

By means of our love for God's children, people who walk in fellowship with God reveal His nature to others.

People can see how He has changed our lives to make us like Him—conformed to His image.

Our love for others also testifies *to us*—It gives **US** confidence before God.

John begins a **prolonged transition** which *slowly* moves from *love* as a characteristic of people who walk in fellowship with God, to *life*, the final characteristic 4:12-5:10

He begins this transition by describing *results* of showing love for the brethren (12-18).

Revelation of God's nature 4:12-16

By our love for the brethren, people who walk in fellowship with God *reveal God's nature to others*.

Though no one has ever seen God, our deeds of love for others demonstrate He's in us and **shows what He is like**.

It makes our spoken testimony concerning God credible to those who observe our lives.

Secondly, when we show love to one another, it gives us...

Confidence before God 4:17-18

“By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, & whoever fears has not been perfected in love”

In addition to the revelation to others, the presence of love also testifies to us.

It gives us confidence before God.

These *results* of love could also be considered *reasons* we should love

Reasons for Love 4:19-5:2

John gives us 3 reasons why we ought to love one another:

1.GOD’S COMPASSION

God’s love for us 4:19-20 *“We love because he first loved us. ²⁰If anyone says, “I love God,” & hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”*

We love one another because God 1st loved us. 19
If anyone *says*, “I love God” & hates his brother,
he’s a liar. 20

Why? Because everyone characterized by not loving his brother whom he has seen isn’t capable of loving God Whom he hasn’t seen.

This is a pretty clear affirmation:

If you don't love God's children,
you don't love God either!

Again, John's premise isn't referring to a single reaction toward a single brother!

He is referring to a characteristic of life, related to God's children
He is again going back to the contrast between the world and God's family.

The world hates the family of God. If WE hate them, we join the world, & can't claim to love God.

He repeats again what He said before: ***Loving God leads to loving His family!***

2nd reason to love one another:

2. GOD'S COMMAND 4:21 *"This commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."*

Commandment we've received from Him: everyone characterized by loving God also ought to love his brother.

God doesn't ask us if we **feel** like loving our brother,

God doesn't ask us if we **want** to love our brother.

God issues a **command**:

"LOVE your brother!" Period.

3. GOD'S CONCERN

2 premises build on each other **5:1-2** *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, & everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God & obey his commandments."*

Premise #1: **Everyone characterized by believing that Jesus is the Christ is born from God.** (Cp. 4:2-3)

This is how you become a child of God: by believing in Him.

Not result of being a loving person, or anything else we do!

It's the result of believing in Him; trusting Him.

Premise #2: **Everyone characterized by loving the One who gave birth ought to love the child who is born to Him.**

"That's how we know that we will love God's children whenever we're loving God & keeping His commands."

... That's how we know that the following statement is true...

That's backwards to how we usually think of this passage!

Normally part "b" is assumed to prove part "a."

NIV suggests that loving God and keeping His commandments *proves* that we love His children.

That's backwards!

It doesn't make sense!

"Our love for God & keeping His commandments proves that we love God's children?"

No, our love for God's children proves that we love God & are committed to keeping His commandments.

That's what the entire surrounding passage tells us!

The two go together!

When we're born of God, He becomes our Father & we become part of His family.

As members of His family, we also love the rest of the family—the other people that He has given birth to.

If we're really His children, we'll love His children.

When we love God & keep His commands, we'll also love His children.

Love for God & obedience to His commands will always lead to love for His children.

What Difference Should this Make in Our Lives?

What should we DO about it?

1st, we show our love for the Savior by showing love to His children

–even those who are ornery, & hard to get along with!

If we truly love the Father, we'll commit ourselves to love His children.

John's argument is directed to love for the family in general

–*not every person in every situation!*

However, that attitude *will* be evident in our relationship with specific brothers!

Do we make excuses when we have a quarrel with a brother?

Are we committed to giving up our rights, resolving the tension & showing love to that person?

We can't be enjoying fellowship with the Father when we know we're part of a rift in His family!

2nd, such demonstrations of love for one another are fruit of the Spirit's work in us.

He produces genuine love for one another.

We must draw from Him all we need to sustain that kind of love for one another.

3rd, love for God's children will lead to unity & reconciliation in the midst of conflict or differences of opinion & preference.

1 Cor. –the church that had everything except love!

Paul calls us to demonstrate love for one another.

John would add that *since we're part of the family*, we ought to love one another.

If we're persistent in refusing to surrender our rights for the people we rub shoulders with everyday, what basis do we have to believe that we will be willing to give in to God's will, **when we can't even SEE Him?!!**

That's John's question.

We find ourselves questioning God Himself, when His plan doesn't go along with ours!

We want to argue with God about His plan.

We can't see Him; we can't understand Him!

Who does He think He is?!!

No wonder we fight among ourselves when WE don't agree about things.

Our love for family will lead to willingness to give up our rights & preferences & to seek our brother's welfare.

***When the world sees that love for one another among the members of God's family, they'll know we are Christians by our love!
They'll know we're followers of Christ!***