

Assurance

ASSURANCE TO BELIEVE GOD'S LOVE

Focal Verses • 1 JOHN 4:13–5:5

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: COMPREHEND what is required to live in community; SENSE love within the community that exemplifies love and faith in God; and CELEBRATE the community's contribution to our formation as disciples of Jesus.

In Focus

Whenever Breana got to church on Sunday morning, Brandon was right in her face. He was overbearing and hardly gave her space to talk to anyone else. Breana tolerated Brandon because he was a member of her Sunday School class and a fellow brother in Christ. Though Breana appeared to be kind, inside, she was fuming with anger at Brandon's inability to take what she was sure were obvious clues—verbal and otherwise—that she was uncomfortable with his attentiveness.

Breana began to feel guilty about being nice to Brandon and then mocking him behind his back. Breana understood her behavior did not reflect the teachings of Christ, which meant loving our fellow brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Therefore, Breana decided to lean on the assurance of God's word by being honest and forthright with Brandon. Breana knew she needed to stop her cruel remarks about him to others. The following Sunday, Breana talked to Brandon and related her discomfort. She felt the resentment leave, replaced by a greater appreciation for Brandon, who graciously received her message and apologized for the discomfort.

If we cannot love our fellow Christians, who are visible, how can we love God who is invisible? In this week's lesson, we will learn how God's love is made real in our relationships with others. What assurance do we have from God to take the command to love fellow believers seriously?

SCAN FOR VIDEO



Keep in Mind

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him”
(1 John 5:1, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV 1 John 4:13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 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?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

The People, Places, and Times

John. The writer of the book of 1 John is thought to be John the apostle. John, along with his brother James, was a fisherman until he was called by Jesus to join the other eleven disciples. For three years, he followed and learned from Christ. John, along with Peter and James, was a part of Jesus' inner circle. In his self-titled Gospel, he refers to himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). After Pentecost, John was said to have led the church in Ephesus and eventually was exiled during the reign of Domitian to the island of Patmos. He is known as the one apostle who died a natural death, although it is also reported that he was thrown into a pot of boiling oil.

Day of Judgment. This judgment refers to the final and ultimate judgment of God. It involves the final appearance of Christ when

He judges the actions of all humankind. This phrase finds its roots in the Old Testament concept of the Day of the Lord. The Hebrews believed this would be the day when God would judge the nations and vindicate His people. In the New Testament, it loses its nationalistic tone and refers to God's solemn condemnation of all evil. On that day, Christians will inherit eternal life and unbelievers the ill-fated choice of eternal damnation (hell).

Background

The letters of John are three brief epistles. The succinctness is misleading, for they deal with insightful and significant questions about the fundamental nature of the Christian spiritual experience. The Johannine letters also provide a fascinating insight into the condition of the church at the end of the first century. Heresy

played a critical and deceptive role in the church. Autonomy and church organization are reflected. The genuine nature of a committed and obedient relationship with God through Christ is strongly and affectionately depicted and commanded.

In his first epistle, John described how love is evidence of our relationship to God (1 John 4:14–21). The present assurance is so obvious that even the fear of Judgment Day is eliminated (vv. 17–18). In the final chapter, John turned to the interrelationship of love and righteousness. Those who are born of God do not find His commandments to be troublesome (5:3). The faith of the children of God gives them power to discover victory over the world that would obstruct the execution of commands (v. 4). That faith rests in Jesus as the Son of God (v. 5). Again, accurate belief enters the picture: Jesus was fully human (v. 6) and the Spirit bears witness to the reality of Jesus (vv. 7–8). The result is a great inner confidence that God “has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (from v. 11, NLT). Again, the line of demarcation between the one who has life and the one who does not is made crystal clear (v. 12).

At-A-Glance

1. Living Proof (1 John 4:13–17)
2. Loving Proof (vv. 18–19)
3. Lasting Proof (4:20–5:5)

In Depth

1. Living Proof (1 John 4:13–17)

All Christians receive the Holy Spirit as living proof of God’s presence in our lives. The Holy Spirit gives us power to love and confess Jesus Christ as Lord, and provides assurance that we are connected to our Heavenly Father.

Perfect love does not mean we love perfectly; it is a description of our Savior’s love for us. Jesus loves flawlessly because He accepts us with all our imperfections and mistakes, regardless of our gender, sex, race, marital, educational, or economic status, physical, mental, or emotional qualities, age, or cultural background. He loves us! Knowing we are loved by God diminishes our apprehension of Judgment Day, increases our need to see others saved, and supplies us freedom to love indiscriminately and do the work God called us to do. The confidence we receive in acknowledging God’s love is not arrogant. Arrogance is when we depend on and boast about our own abilities. The confidence that the Bible describes is a declaration of our relationship with Jesus and evidence of the abiding Holy Spirit within us.

2. Loving Proof (vv. 18–19)

The love of God eradicates all fear. If we operate from fear, it is a sign that we have not fully grasped the concept of God’s unconditional love. Many Christians function in fear and live as prisoners of anxiety, even though the Lord cannot use us when we walk in apprehension. If we fear Judgment Day, are we certain of our salvation? There needs to be a level of confidence in knowing we are saved and eternally secure with Christ.

We cannot explain why God loves us; He just does! It is human nature to want justification for our feelings and actions; however, the Bible tells us Jesus loved us before we became Christians (Romans 5:8). So if a sovereign God can love imperfect people, then who are we to refuse to love another imperfect being? Christians have experienced the fullness of Christ’s love and have testimonies of His kindness. The greatest tragedy is to hoard the love of God and miss opportunities to pour this precious gift into the lives of others.

3. Lasting Proof (4:20–5:5)

John's emphasis on loving others is nowhere more clearly reflected than in this passage of Scripture. We are lying if we say we love God but actually hate our brothers and sisters in Christ. Many Bible teachers skate over these verses because they are too direct. Yet, these verses force us to examine our actions. How can we claim to love the invisible Lord and still be seen to hate the visible inhabitants of His kingdom? We cannot love God apart from loving one another. How we treat each other is in direct correlation with how much we love God. This principle should alter the way we view the body of Christ. Our love for God confirms our love for others; if we love the Father, we must love our siblings. This sounds simple; however, it is not always an easy task. Still, loving others is not an option; it is a commandment. The commandments of God are not burdensome when we rely on the Holy Spirit to love through us. The world is full of evil, yet we have total victory when we believe in the name of Jesus and trust God to fight our battles for us.

Search the Scriptures

1. How do we know God lives in us (1 John 4:13)?
2. What gives proof that we love God (vv. 16–17)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why is it important that we love one another?
2. Why do we fear judgment or punishment from God?
3. How is God's love made perfect?

Liberating Lesson

Society teaches us to love conditionally. Some people live in fear of rejection from those who claim to love them. This is not real love. One of

the most remarkable attributes of God is His ability to love unconditionally and completely. No matter what we face in life, God's love is everlasting, and nothing can separate us from His love! Not only do we have God's promise of love but also the promise of eternal life. With this kind of reassurance, what keeps us from loving others?

Application for Activation

The Lord has high regard for the community of believers, and we should, too. All we can do is learn to love and obey God's command. Pray and ask God to reveal where you can extend love to someone in the family of God. After God shows you, act! Write in a journal about how the incident impacted your life and share your experience with the class.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:
