



## [1 John 4:7-8](#)

(7) Beloved, we should love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God. (8) The one who does not love does not know God because God is love.

## [1 John 4:16](#)

(16) And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. God is love, and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him.

*A Faithful Version*

These verses furnish Christians with critical marching orders and guidance while providing crucial insight into our Creator's nature—all centered around the word “love.” Twice in these three verses, John declares that “[God is love](#).” He also implores us to “love one another” and to *know* God, and then he identifies God as the *source* of love. Furthermore, our Savior commanded His disciples, earlier in [John 13:34-35](#) (see also [John 15:12](#), 17), to love one another “*as I have loved you*.”

Consider that God has created humanity physically in His image ([Genesis 1:26](#)), and further, is re-creating those whom He has called into His spiritual image ([II Corinthians 3:18](#)). To that, we must add our standing orders to love God ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), to seek Him ([Matthew 6:33](#)), and to establish an intimate relationship with Him that we might become more familiar with the image that [Christ](#) came to reveal and that we are to become ([John 1:18](#)).

Consider also the following quote from John Ritenbaugh's 1992 sermon, “Do You See God?”:

We are beginning to see an application to you and me. Will God be working in our lives if we don't *see* Him? If we don't *recognize* Him? If we don't *understand* His purpose, what He is working out in you and me? I don't think so!

In like manner, in his 2006 sermon, “God, the Church's Greatest Problem,” he opined:

Since eternal life lies in the relationship with God, it is extremely important how frequent and accurate our thoughts about Him are. We can conclude that what one knows about the true God Himself and how one uses that knowledge are the two most important issues in life.

A strong relationship with God is critical to attaining eternal life, and the strength of that relationship depends upon an accurate understanding of who He is—His nature. To that end, we have the written Word of God to guide us as it reveals the true nature of God. Moreover, since the Bible teaches us that God is love and that our ability to know God will be determined by our willingness and capacity to love, it is vital that we understand the true meaning of love, particularly as intended by the apostle John's inspired writings. In fact, without this understanding, how can we possibly proceed with our marching orders to seek God—to know Him—and to reflect His will in our interactions with all mankind?

But, everyone is familiar with the concept of love, right? After all, virtually all of civilization is absorbed—even obsessed—with the idea of love. Throughout man's history, countless writers, performers, pundits, and deep thinkers have devoted much—if not most—of their respective careers trying to define and even display love. So, determining the meaning of this simple, four-letter word should not be too great a challenge, right?

Perhaps it is not as easy as one might think. In fact, if we study the world's most common usages and descriptions of love, we find that they have little or nothing in common with the divine nature of our Creator. Stated another way, we discover that John's use of the word “love,” as translated from the Greek word *agape*, has little to do with our modern, worldly concept of love.

— Joseph B. Baity

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