

**“Because He First Loved Us”  
1 John 4:12-21**

**1 John 4:12: If we love one another, then...**

- ...God abides in us... → corresponds to v.13-16
- ...and his love is perfected in us. → corresponds to v.17-20

**GOD ABIDES IN US. v.13-16**

**What does it mean that God “abides” in us?**

**1. We have relationship with God.**

- “Abide” = to dwell in, to take up residence in, to live in a place. Ref. Jn 15:1-14
  - v.13: ...we abide in Him and He in us...
  - v.15: ...God abides in Him and he in God...
  - v.16: ...whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him.

→ Application: Relationship grows from time spent together... in His Word, in prayer, with His family (the church).

**2. We have the Spirit from God. v.13**

- Every believer has God’s Spirit living in him. John also calls it the anointing. 2:20, 27; John 17:26
- God’s Spirit in us is real and gives us what we need for every situation/circumstance. 2:27; Ref. Phil. 4:13

**3. We have a testimony from God. v.14-16**

- Objective: His work in the world. v.14: *We testify: the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.*
- Subjective: His work in our life. v.14, 15, 16

→ Application: What do you imagine when John says that we ‘abide’ in the love of God?

**GOD’S LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US. v.17-21**

**What does it mean that love is “perfected” in us?**

- Perfect = make mature, bring to completion
- Love is being perfected = love is maturing; love is coming to maturity

**1. Maturing love (through relationship with God) gives us confidence for the day of judgment. v.17**

- We gain confidence as we see God working in our life—His Spirit in us & changing us. Ref. 2:28; 3:21; 5:14  
-“I may not be who I want to be, but I know I am not who I used to be—because of His work in my life.”
- John links confidence to our position in Christ: ...*because as He is, so also are we in this world.*  
-Because Christ is loved, I am loved in God’s sight. Because Christ is righteous, I am righteous.

**2. Maturing love (through relationship with God) casts out fear. v.18-19**

- Holy fear is legitimate. Reverence for God & authority. (I fear my boss, but I’m not ‘afraid’ of him.)  
-Psalm 34:9: Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.
- Unholy fear is rooted in unbelief in God and His promises.  
-Unholy fear keeps me from moving toward God (in obedience and worship) and toward others (in love).  
→ Unholy fear keeps me from loving God and others.
- Perfect love casts out fear. (Lit. “throws it outside”)  
-Often, what keeps us from loving others is fear that we won’t be loved in return.  
-For Christians, this no longer is true. Why? Because we don’t love to get, we love in response. v.19, 16  
→ v.19: We love because He first loved us.

**3. Maturing love (through relationship with God) calls me to love other believers. v.20-21**

- We tend to think that loving God is easier than loving people. John says just the opposite.
- By actively and practically loving others, you will grow to love them more.

## From the Heidelberg Catechism...

**52. What comfort is it to you that Christ “shall come to judge the living and the dead”?**

That in all my sorrows and persecutions, I, with uplifted head, look for the very One who offered Himself for me to the judgment of God, and removed all curse from me, to come as Judge from heaven, who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall take me with all His chosen ones to Himself into heavenly joy and glory.

**53. What do you believe concerning the “Holy Spirit”?**

First, that He is co-eternal God with the Father and the Son. Second, that He is also given unto me: by true faith makes me a partaker of Christ and all His benefits, comforts me, and shall abide with me forever.

**54. What do you believe concerning the “holy, catholic Church”?**

That out of the whole human race, from the beginning to the end of the world, the Son of God, by His Spirit and Word, gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself unto everlasting life a chosen communion in the unity of the true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain a living member of this communion.

**55. What do you understand by the “communion of saints”?**

First, that believers, one and all, as members of the Lord Jesus Christ, are partakers with Him in all His treasures and gifts; second, that each one must feel himself bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and welfare of other members.

**56. What do you believe concerning the “forgiveness of sins”?**

That God, for the sake of Christ’s satisfaction, will no more remember my sins, nor the sinful nature with which I have to struggle all my life long; but graciously imputes to me the righteousness of Christ, that I may nevermore come into condemnation.

**Book recommendation:**

*When People are BIG and God is Small* by Edward T. Welch