

## God's (un)Secret Identity: Our God is Love

### Part 1 *Our God is love, so let us break through barriers*

6/13-14

No one can teach us more about the love of God, than the Apostle John  
 The Bible says of him, he was ***'The one whom Jesus loved'*** **John 20:2**  
 He was the only one of the 12 disciples who stayed with Jesus all through His crucifixion, even  
     given the responsibility by Jesus to care for His own dear mother  
 But he didn't begin in this way, as he was intense, passionate, nicknamed a ***'son of Thunder'***  
 He and his brother tried a power grab to get the seats of authority in Jesus' kingdom  
 He was so angry at being rejected by a village he asked Christ for permission to kill them all  
 But John, became the one who would write about love in the bible more than anyone else  
 And that should give all of us hope, that with Jesus, *our beginning never determines our ending*  
 So give special attention as we open to **1 John 4** and discover more deeply, the love of God  
***"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."***  
**1 John 4:7-8**

### What God is

Twice John tells us that ***'God is love'*** (**4:8** and **4:16**), so the very nature of God, is love  
 There cannot be a single thought that God has, an emotion He feels, or an action He performs  
     that can be separated from His love...God is love!  
 He is thoroughly, entirely, systemically loving, and He cannot be anything other  
 And we must learn as God's people to understand, and more importantly, believe that truth  
 If we did, we would not experience spiritual anxiety, we would not struggle with worry  
 We would not burn with jealousy, or covet anything, or be unable to forgive, or complain  
 All of these struggles and more evaporate when we truly know the measure of God's love for us  
 How can we be jealous in the face of God's love, Who has given us all good things?  
 How can we covet another's possessions if we really believe that God has lovingly and perfectly  
     measured out all things for our greatest happiness?  
 How can we worry about tomorrow when our loving Heavenly Father is already there?  
 How can we not forgive the one who hurts us when we daily receive the merciful love of God?  
 How can we grumble about others, or complain about life when God's love is perfect toward us?

Several years ago, Jake Millen preached about verse 18, trying to grapple with its depths  
***"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."*** **1 John 4:18**  
 We all struggle with understanding this, but how freeing to know we are not living under the  
     scowl or irritation of God as His children, but under His pleasure and favor for us  
 To gain any understanding of the incomprehensible love of God, is to eradicate fear  
***"The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*** **Psalms 118:6**  
 John tells us in **4:19**, that our love for God and others springs from God's love for us  
 How then can we not love every person, even those different from us, or even those who are  
     against us, when we grasp the enormity of God's love for us?

What does the word ***'love'*** even mean?

We use it to describe how we feel about our team, our children, our phones, our food

The NT writers took a word that hardly occurred in classical Greek, and elevated it to a new meaning, simply because the Greek world knew nothing of love of this kind

It is the Greek word *agape*, and it speaks of self-sacrificing love for even the undeserving

It is a *self-sacrificing love given to one who needs to be loved, whether they deserve it or not*

Almost all of us love because the person is such a good friend, such a perfect soul mate, or so kind-hearted, so enjoyable to be around, or understanding, or uplifting

But God chooses to love, and His love takes the form of self-sacrifice for the undeserving

He freely takes the initiative to move toward an undeserving person in need

***“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8***

We didn’t clean up our own act, or get a spiritual makeover, and *then* God noticed and loved us

We were still morally filthy, defiant rebels toward Him, which is what Romans stressed 2 verses later: we were enemies of God when He reached out in His love and saved us

### **What God did**

What God is, determines what God does...He is love, and love demands action

***“God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:9-10***

**‘Propitiation’** is an unfamiliar word for most, but it refers to the making of a sacrifice on behalf of sinners, that changes God’s wrath *against* them to God’s favor *for* them

His wrath toward every one of us sinners is just, deserved and right

It is a predicament with no human solution, and one with eternally dire consequences

God, in His great love, would not stand by idle and let humanity eternally suffer, for Love Acts

He sent His willing Son to be the sacrifice for our sins, Who took our guilt upon Himself, dying the death we deserved and earning for us God’s favor and friendship

It’s this amazing love that moved Charles Wesley to write one of the church’s most loved hymns:

*“And can it be that I should gain, An int’rest in the Savior’s blood?*

*Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?*

*Amazing love! how can it be That Thou, my God, should die for me?*

Refrain: *Amazing love! how can it be, That Thou, my God, should die for me!*

### **What the people of God are to do**

***“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” 1 John 4:11***

John stiffens this even more in verse 13 that our love assures us we belong to God

Then he warns us in verse 20, ***“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but 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.” 4:20***

He caps off this warning by reminding us of a command Jesus gave all His disciples: ***“whoever loves God must also love his brother.” 4:21***

When I was young, my mother and I would sing together that little children’s song: *“Jesus loves*

*the little children, all the children of the world. Red, and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world.”*

Later brown was added in, and the point was emphasized: God loves every person on this earth! When you see someone who is hispanic, black, Indian, Asian, or white, you are seeing a person that God created and set His love on

To be the children of God, we must love the way God loves...freely, intentionally, savingly Nobody shows us more clearly how we must love than our rabbi, our Master, Jesus Christ Let me ask you to turn with me to John 4, and we will draw some principles as we go through it

**John 4** opens with the ministry of Jesus exploding, and to avoid the escalated conflict with the religious leaders He leaves southern Israel, Judea, and begins an 80 mile journey north to Galilee

The problem for the Jew was that between the two areas, was Samaria, and many devout Jews would not even step foot on the soil of Samaria

**4:4** says, ***“He had to pass through Samaria”*** and it is critical we look hard at this

To get to Galilee from Judea, a Jew would often cross the Jordan river east, travel north along Samaria until he passed their land, then he’d cross back over the Jordan into Galilee

There was another way, so ***‘He had to pass through Samaria’*** is not true navigationally

Look at **4:34** and we’ll see the reason: ***“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”***

His Father sent Him into Samaria because a woman desperately needed to know the love of God

We are about to meet her, but there are some things we need to understand

I’ve told you several times that no time in human history was as filled with racism, prejudice and discrimination than the 1st century world

Yet do we really understand what racism, prejudice and discrimination mean?<sup>1</sup>

Let’s understand that *Prejudice* refers to negative emotions or values we have toward people from a social group that is not our own

*Discrimination* acts out those negative emotions and values with inappropriate treatment of certain people because of the group they belong to

Prejudice is deeply emotional, discrimination visibly behavioral, but *Racism* is a belief, an attitude that a person’s race is superior to another

All 3 were on full display between Jews and Samaritans, who were half Jews with Gentile blood To a Jew, Samaritans lost their racial purity, and in fact if a Jew married a Gentile, the parents of that Jew held a funeral on the same day, considering their married child dead

Jewish rabbis taught that God hated Samaritans, but the God-man Jesus heads into Samaria

And reverse racism was true since Samaritans despised the Jewish people, treating them terribly ***But Jesus, the God Who is love, breaks the man-made barrier between Jew and Samaritan***

They drew near the town of Sychar, where the famous Jacob’s well was located

It was high noon, He is tired, so He sat, and sent His disciples to town to buy food

He knew the appointment He was sent to Samaria for was about to come

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<sup>1</sup> The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

A Samaritan woman comes to the well for water and Jesus said to her, ***'Give me a drink'***

That sounds harsh and abrupt to us, but not in that day, and she was startled that Jesus, a Jew, would even talk to her a Samaritan (4:9)

Rabbis were forbidden to greet a woman in public, not even his own wife or daughter in public They taught that women were incapable of receiving any real teaching, saying, *'Better that the words of the law should be burned than delivered to women.'*

One rabbinic saying went, *'Each time that a man prolongs converse with a woman he causes evil to himself...and in the end inherits Gehinnom.'*

The Pharisees were called *Bruised and Bleeding Pharisees* because they would close their eyes when a woman walked near them, often tripping down stairs or walking into buildings  
***Jesus, the God Who is love, breaks the man-made barrier between a man and woman***

He had been sent to her, for she desperately needed to know of God's love, and He would show it

He invites her to ask Him for living water in 4:10, which in the ancient world was the life-giving, soul-cleansing spiritual water of God that satisfies the thirst of the soul

You see, Jesus wasn't just there in Samaria to break barriers, or overcome racism, discrimination and prejudice, He was there to save her, along with many in her village

He would bring many Samaritans into the family of God, where there is no division between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female

He offered her living water that would satisfy her soul and cleanse her from her sin, but she responded that He had nothing to draw water with and the well was deep

*I want this living water, but how can you give that to me, you have no idea how deep my sin and failures run*

He answers her deeper questions affirming in 4:14 that He can indeed give this water to her

She is struggling to believe and deflects the conversation back to physical water, but Jesus won't let her go, provoking her to see how great her need really was: ***'Go get your husband'***

He proves how deep His living water can really go, telling her in 4:18 that she's had 5 husbands, and was now living with a 6th man out of wedlock

You see, there was a reason she walked ½ mile to get water when there were water sources in her town, for she was a scandalous woman, a homewrecker

Women drew water in the cool of the evening, not in the heat of the day, she's despised by the women of Sychar

Her soul is laid bare, she sees her deep need, she asks if He is the long awaited Messiah, and Jesus tells her, Yes

The disciples come back with dinner, shocked (4:27) that He was even talking with a woman But He wasn't hungry, so filled with satisfaction that His Father gave Him the encounter with this woman, and His anticipation is high as she returns with many of the towns people

He stayed two days teaching them about living water, and salvation and God's love and the most remarkable statement of the entire story is spoken by the people of Samaria in **verse 42**

***"They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.'"***

Both Jew and Samaritan believed that God was only interested in saving their own ethnic group!

But now they understood and believed that Jesus had come to save people of every tribe, and nation and color, and ethnicity: red and yellow, black and white and brown  
Did John first come to understand the extent of the love of God from these Samaritans?  
After all, in our passage in **1 John 4:14**, he wrote, ***“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.”***

God’s love, so big, His nature to love so deep, that all races, all nations, all peoples are precious in His sight and He will gladly, joyfully, move toward them in order to save  
He will cross boundaries, He will break down every barrier, He will do more than have a conversation, He will do what is necessary to go into the deep wells of pain and division and racism and suffering, and offer living water  
Will you, will I, will we, do the same as the Lord directs our steps toward divine appointments?

Let’s pray