



1 JOHN 4:7-21

1. Love COMES FROM God (v7,16).
→ *How do the world's definitions of love differ from the love Christ demonstrated for us?*
2. God demonstrated REAL and POWERFUL love in CHRIST (v9-10).
→ *How do the world's definitions of love differ from the love Christ demonstrated for us?*
3. Love is a HALLMARK of the CHILD of God (v7-8)
 - * If we, as Christians, are to be KNOWN for ANYTHING, it should be our LOVE for ONE ANOTHER.→ *Above all, Christians should be known for their love. Discuss. What do Christians in society tend to be known for? If we're not careful, what other things might we become known for? How do we make sure it's our love for one another that stands out?*
4. Love should be the NATURAL OUTPOURING of a Christian's heart (v11-12,19).
→ *How do we make sure it's God's love that pours out, rather than any number of other things?*
5. MATURITY can be best judged by how, who & when we love (v17).
→ *How do we tend to judge Christian maturity? Is how we love normally at the top of the list? Should it be?*
6. Love is the ANTIDOTE to FEAR (v18).
 - * Religion is about exerting FEAR through CONTROL perfect love DRIVES OUT that fear.
 - * We don't PARENT by FEAR, but by LOVE.→ *What did Jesus fight against and how did you use love to do so? If we're too full of fear is there a danger that we'll struggle to be vessels of God's love? Why? How does His pure, unconditional, unending love fix that? Why is it so important that we have the 'full experience' of His love?*
7. Loving our brothers & sisters is not a CONVENIENCE OPTION (v20-21).
→ *"Ultimately, our LEGACY will be the QUANTITY & QUALITY of our love." Discuss!*

LOVE IS THE WAY TO VICTORY

PREMISE: The more you WALK in LOVE, the more VICTORY you'll EXPERIENCE.
→ *Is this true and how does it work? What are the dangers of failing to walk in love? Ultimately, what does walking in love look like?*

A. LOVE IS A POWERFUL DEFENSIVE WEAPON

- *"Christ-like love is always the perfect response to every situation." Do you agree?*
- * Walking in love is crucial in GUARDING hearts, MEASURING steps and PROTECTING relationships.

- * The real battleground is YOUR OWN THOUGHTS.
 - * If those thoughts become filled with ANGER, OFFENCE, REVENGE, JEALOUSY, etc., you'll LOSE that battle spectacularly.
 - * Replace all that with LOVE, GRACE, MERCY, PATIENCE, GENTLENESS, etc. and you'll find yourself WINNING again & again.
 - * Note how damaging CRITICISM, GOSSIP, SPREADING RUMOURS can be ... Not just FOR THEM, but even more so FOR ME.
→ *Why are those things just as damaging for the perpetrator as the recipient?*
- Proverbs 4:23** → *Above all else, GUARD YOUR HEARTS, for everything you do flows from it.*
- *How do you 'guard your heart?' What role does 'walking in love' have in that?*

SUMMARY: Every time you slip into SINFUL thoughts & attitudes, you OPEN A DOOR to the prowling lion; every time you CHOOSE LOVE, you SLAM IT SHUT. Every time you slip into SINFUL thoughts & attitudes, you CLOSE the DOOR to the Holy Spirit; every time you CHOOSE LOVE, you OPEN IT WIDE.
→ *What sort of sinful thoughts and attitudes are we talking about?*
→ *What sort of 'love choices' are we talking about?*
→ *What principles did Jesus teach to help us put a careful guard over our hearts? How do they contradict the worldly way?*

B. LOVE IS A POWERFUL OFFENSIVE WEAPON

- * Not talking about your best & determined HUMAN EFFORT, but about SUPERNATURAL love.
- * God the Father has Poured the love of Christ into your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). Our job is to UNLEASH it lavishly & indiscriminately.
- * Sometimes love must be STRONG, sometimes SOFT, but always SPIRIT LED.
→ *Give examples of Jesus demonstrating strong or soft love. Note, in each case, how they are always perfectly Holy Spirit inspired responses.*

JESUS knew the LAW & was an expert in all the right PRINCIPLES. But above all, He was PERFECTLY SENSITIVE to the Holy Spirit's leading:

- * He was able to DISCERN what was needed in every situation.
- * He didn't allow His holy heart to DRIVE HIM AWAY from sinners.
- * He didn't let man's RULES and likely REACTIONS stop Him from doing what love DEMANDED.
- * He was prepared to do the UNORTHODOX & UNEXPECTED to fulfil the Holy Spirit's directive & purpose.
- * This is our MINISTRY EXAMPLE.
→ *What walls can love break down that nothing else can?*
→ *How did Jesus balance His detailed understanding and careful observation of the Law and His operation in the ways and gifts of the Holy Spirit?*
→ *What does it mean to ask the question, what does love demand?*