

1 John 4:7-21  
“Loving One Another”

In preparation for this special day of remembering our loved ones who have gone to be with our Lord, I sent an email to our church-wide email group asking you all to share with me the best advice you ever received from a deceased loved one – advice that gave meaning to your life, or perhaps transformed you in some way.

Dictionary.com defines “advice” as “an opinion or recommendation offered as a guide to action, or conduct.” We often offer our advice (especially unsolicited advice) to those we love dearly because we want the very best for them, isn’t that right?

Mable Canty shared that her mother, Mrs. Caroline Johnson, reminded her often: “You are in control of the way someone treats you. Regardless of how they treat you, give them back the kindness and respect you deserve.”

Cara Davis said her father told her many times, “Never go to be angry at someone you love.”

My grandmother - my father’s mother, Juanita Davis always told me, “Put God first in your life. If you do, everything will work out just fine.” Bob Wayson’s mother told him something similar. She told Bob, “Trust in God and He will provide!”

Louise Ramsey said, “Whenever I talked to my Dad about a problem, he always said “Weese, everything always works out!” He was right, but lots of times I would wonder - when!!”

Roy Canty said that his high school principal, Dr. Charles E. Murray, taught that “People do things according to their understanding.” For Roy, this meant that when a person is in darkness, he acts accordingly, and vice versa.

Beth Welch and Dale Eaddy shared this, “Mom raised 3 girls by herself and told us, ‘never depend on a man to support you’ and ‘Learn to live on a budget’.” She taught us to be self-sufficient

and was probably one of the first people to use cents-off coupons from a newspaper.

Barbara Harper said, “When my husband, Jim was so sick and knew it was just a matter of time, he told me "there is a big difference between living and breathing." He wanted me to continue in life living it to the fullest – we should enjoy every sunrise, and pray we live to enjoy the sunset that same day. I try, oh, how, I try, but without him, it is HARD.”

Janis Lawther said, “My dad never really gave me much advice, but the way he lived his life as a man who loved the LORD, putting him first in everything he ever did, or said, was all the "advice" I needed. He was the perfect example of what a Christian should be, which is how I try to live my life.”

I loved what Janis shared, and it reminded me of a message I once saw that said, “You can preach a better sermon with the way you live your life than you can with your lips.”

I think my favorite reply came from Janel Bell, and she said, “Todd, hopefully no one’s deceased love one is giving them any advice!” It took me a minute to get it, but she’s right!

The 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John tells us that just before dying on the cross for the sins of the world, our Lord Jesus gave some “advice” to those he loved. Jesus said, “The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him.

“Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

Our Scripture lesson this morning tells us that God is Love. Now, just about everybody believes that love is important, right? But love is usually thought of as a feeling. The Gospel writer, John says, “God is love,” not “Love is God.” Our world, with its

shallow and selfish view of love, has turned these words around, and contaminated our understanding of what love really is.

The world thinks that love is what makes a person “feel good,” and that it is all right to sacrifice moral principles and others’ rights in order to obtain such “love.” But that isn’t real love! It is the exact opposite – it’s selfishness! And God is not that kind of “love.”

Real love is like God, who is holy, just, and perfect. If we truly know God, we will love as he does. So, in reality, love is a choice **and an action**, as 1 Corinthians 13 tells us. I wish more people would carefully read this passage of Scripture, and consider how they show love toward others.

It says, “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

So, this is what love looks like, and God is the source of our love. How do we know that God loves us? Because God made a choice to love, and then, He took action to prove that love. God’s Word tells us that God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have eternal life through Him.

This is real love. It is not that we loved God first, but that He loved us, and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins, and to restore us to a right relationship with God! Therefore, Jesus is our example of what it means to love. Everything he did in life and death was supremely, and sacrificially loving.

Today is All Saints Sunday. This “day of remembrance” has always made me pause to consider whether or not the love I have shown to others will have any eternal value. And, it makes me ask myself, “Am I truly loving others as God has loved me – supremely and sacrificially?”

Our Scripture lesson today begs the question, “Dear friends, since God loves us enough to die for our sins, then surely we ought to love each other, shouldn’t we?” Would you all agree with that? But it’s not always easy to love others is it? People get on our nerves, and sometimes we just don’t feel like loving others. I wonder sometimes if that’s because we don’t feel truly loved ourselves.

I am sure most of you are familiar with the classic Christmas cartoon, “The Grinch who stole Christmas.” The poor ole Grinch was a bitter soul. He hated everyone, and everything, that had anything to do with love or joy. And so, he isolated himself way up on top of a snowy mountain in a dark cave with his pet dog, who to him, was nothing more than a slave.

Now the Grinch’s dog was a kind old soul, who loved unconditionally. He was devoted to the Grinch, even though he was treated so badly. (You all realize that dog spelled backwards is God, right? Who loves us unconditionally; though He is often treated badly by those he created and cares for? Just some food for thought...)

Anyway, the Grinch, who had **no** love in his heart, hated the Who’s down in Whoville. These folks lived in the valley just below the mountain, and the Grinch especially hated how the Who’s would join together and celebrate at Christmastime.

So, the Grinch decided that he would steal the Who’s Christmas. That way, they would have nothing to celebrate on Christmas morning. After taking anything and everything from their village as they sleep, the Grinch retreats home, fully confident that by stealing all their stuff, he has certainly ruined the day’s celebration, along with their joy.

Well, just as the Grinch is arriving home, he hears the Who’s down in Whoville singing and celebrating in the center of their village. It is at this point that the Grinch realizes that what they are celebrating is not all of their Christmas stuff, but instead, they are celebrating the love they share with one another.

Seeing this display of sacrificial and unconditional love, the Grinch's heart is touched, and actually is filled so full of love that it grows five times its original size. At this point, the Grinch decides to race down the mountain and return everything he has stolen. The Who's down in Whoville gladly welcome him into their village, forgiving him, and loving him, unconditionally.

Now, what happened to the Grinch that day is what happens to us when we finally realize just how much God **unconditionally** loves us, and wants to forgive us. He wants us to be filled with His love, so much so, that it overflows out from us, and into the lives of others.

But is it really possible to love others as God loves us? Well, God's Word says that "No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love will be brought to full expression through us. Why? Because, God has given us his Holy Spirit as proof that we live in Him and He in us.

And here's a test to see if God's love and Spirit are really in you. Do you truly believe, **and proclaim**, that Jesus is the Son of God? If so, then you have God living in you, and you live in God.

When we become Christians by faith, we receive God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to love as God loves because He lives in our heart, and makes us more and more like Christ everyday. As we live in God by faith, He also gives us the power to love others sacrificially and unconditionally.

Remember, we love each other as a result of his first loving us. And remember also, love is a choice, and an **action**.

Jesus said, "Just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions." Our actions reveal to others whether or not Christ's love is being perfected in us.

The real test of our love for God is how we treat the people right in front of us – our family, friends, and fellow believers.

God's love always involves a choice and an action, and our love should be like His. So, let me ask all of us here to consider

one more question: How well do you display your love for God and others in the choices you make, and in the actions you take?

May God bless you all. Amen.

*Sing “Because He Lives” as closing Hymn*

### Sermon Notes

1 John 4:7-21

“Loving One Another”

- ❖ Jesus said, “Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”
- ❖ Real love is like God, who is holy, just, and perfect.
- ❖ LOVE is a choice **and an action!**
- ❖ This is real love. It is not that we loved God first, but that He loved us, and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins, and to restore us to a right relationship with God! Therefore, Jesus is our example of what it means to love. Everything he did in life and death was supremely, and sacrificially loving.
- ❖ Ask yourself, “Am I truly loving others as God has loved me – supremely and sacrificially?”
- ❖ Our Scripture lesson today begs the question, “Dear friends, since God loves us enough to die for our sins, then surely we ought to love each other, shouldn’t we?”
- ❖ God **unconditionally** loves us, and wants to forgive us. He wants us to be filled with His love, so much so, that it overflows out from us, and into the lives of others.
- ❖ Is it really possible to love others as God loves us?

- ❖ If we love each other, God lives in us, and his love will be brought to full expression through us.

OVER

- ❖ Here's a test to see if God's love and Spirit are really in you. Do you truly believe, ***and proclaim***, that Jesus is the Son of God? If so, then you have God living in you, and you live in God.
- ❖ As we live in God by faith, He also gives us the power to love others sacrificially and unconditionally. Remember, love is a choice, and an ***action***.
- ❖ The real test of our love for God is how we treat the people right in front of us – our family, friends, and fellow believers.
- ❖ How well do you display your love for God and others in the choices you make, and in the actions you take?

***May God bless you!***  
***Have a great week!***