

According to 4:19-20 . . .

. . . what motivates us to love God?

. . . what motivates us to love others?

. . . which is easier – loving someone we can see or loving someone we can't see?

. . . Why does John make this point about loving those we see first?

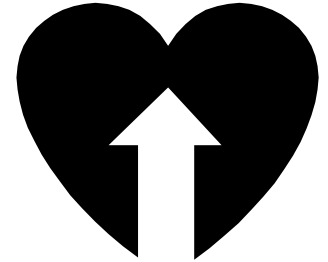
Based on our focus passage, what is the key to loving others?

Essentially . . .

. . . God's love for us should be a central theme of our fellowship time (the rock). When it is, our fear goes away, our courage increases, and we find that loving others becomes more natural (the ripples). Truly, we can't give love till we receive love – God's love! Have you taken the time to drop His "love rock" into the pond of your life today?

The Rock and the Ripples

Ever thrown a rock in the water and then watched the ripples extend for several yards? It's amazing how sometimes even a little pebble can create a ripple well beyond its initial place of impact. So it is with God's love – it is the rock that impacts our life. In these verses John delves further into the second of the two traits, showing even more clearly why loving God and fellowshiping with him is so important for those who wish to obey God and love others.



Read I John 4:7-21

Study Questions:

What words in this passage are also common in the other passages we've already studied? Write down these key words. Do any of them pertain to the theme of fellowship? If so, how?

How many phrases in these verses tell us about God's love for us?

How many phrases in these verses tell us to love another?

According to 4:9-10, how did God show his love for us? Go back and read 3:18. Connect these two verses.

Based on 4:10, who initiated the love affair between God and man? What verses in Romans 5 also give this same idea?

Stop and consider His love. Did you deserve it? Can you ever repay it? Will it ever end? How can you best show God your gratefulness for His love? In what ways can God's love be the "rock" that drops in your life each day and ripples out to all those you meet? In one sentence, write how you will maximize God's love for you?

Based on our verses, what words or phrases are used to describe the nature of God's love? List the qualities of God's love.

Here's a challenge – based on what you've read about love in these last two chapters, write your own definition of love from a biblical perspective.

How does your definition differ from how our culture defines love?

In 4:16, John emphasizes God's love for us. How does he do this?

Why do you think he goes to such length to emphasize this?

4:16-19 states that when God's love is "perfected" in us (or *completed* in us), we have less of something and more of something else. Name these opposites.

How could these contrasting ideas evidence themselves in your relationship with God? Think of at least two.

Now think about how fear would show itself in your fellowship with God. Would it make you tend to hide? Cover up? Fear takes us away from *walking in the light*, which is the key element in fellowship (remember lesson 2?). However, when we understand the nature of God's love, our confidence increases and we're not afraid to be honest with God. Consequently, our fellowship improves. Take a moment and reflect on God's love, then jot down the overriding fear it is gradually casting out of your life.