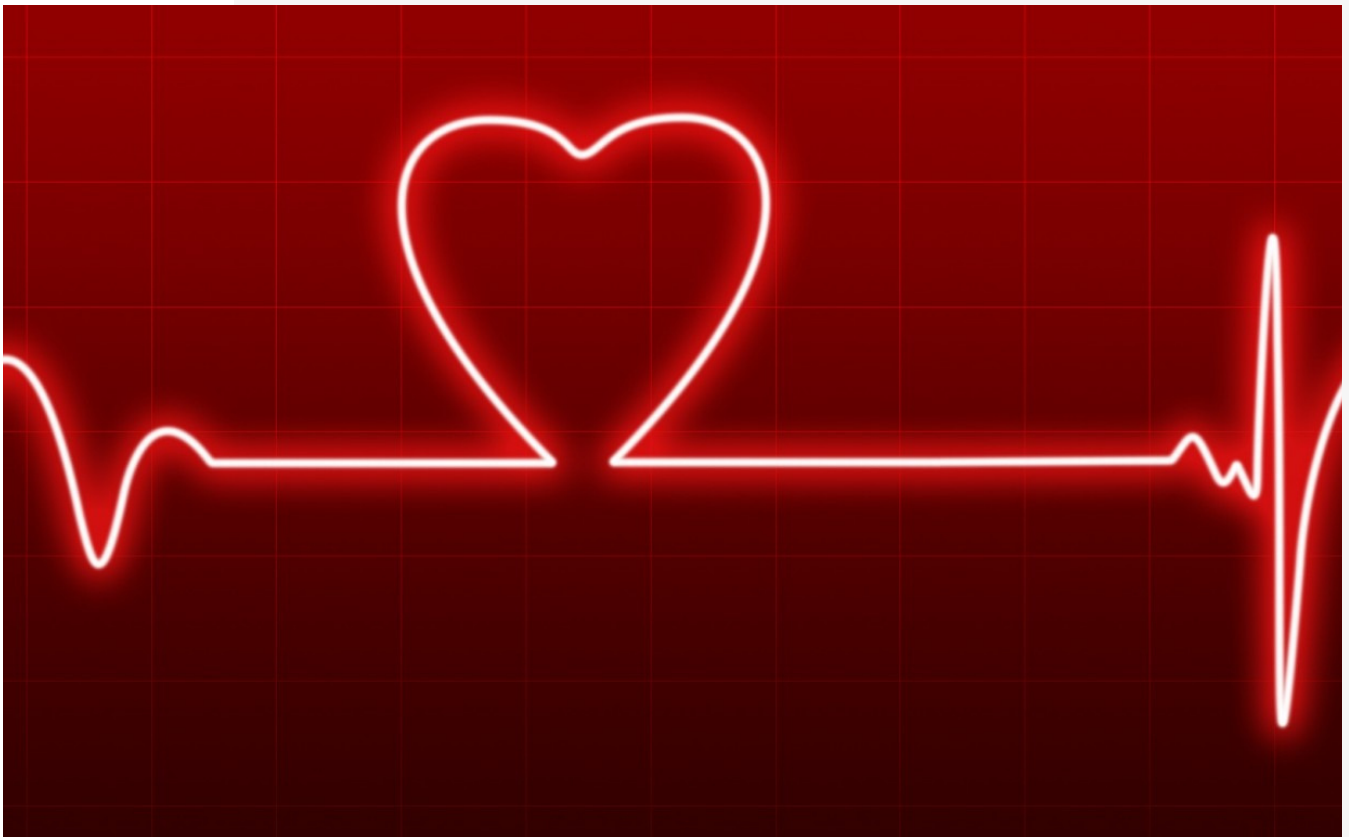


FIND YOUR PURPOSE

1 JOHN 4:7-12

OUR PURPOSE: GOD'S LOVE



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The brain gets a similar 'hit' from love as it does from a small dose of cocaine. Brain imaging studies of love suggest that 12 different areas of the brain are involved in love. When looking or thinking about a loved one, these areas release a cocktail of neurotransmitters across the brain, including oxytocin, dopamine, vasopressin and adrenaline. It takes a fifth-of-a-second for the euphoria-inducing chemicals to start acting on the brain when you are looking at that special someone.

We were made to love and be loved. God made us in such a way that we are most fulfilled when we are loved and when we love. We find our purpose in loving and being loved. **What kind of love fills and fulfills us?**

It's important to answer this question because people who experience felt love - brief experiences of love and connection in everyday life, have significantly higher levels of psychological well-being, which includes feelings of purpose and optimism, compared to those who had lower felt love scores. Loving relationships have been linked to:

- Lower risk of heart disease
- Decreased risk of dying after a heart attack
- Better health habits
- Increased longevity
- Lower stress levels
- Less depression
- Lower risk of diabetes

So, we really want to know, **what kind of love fills and fulfills us?** John, the Apostle of love, gives the answer in 1 John 4:7-12.

BACKGROUND

Sermon 1: God's purpose is to glorify himself in grace-and-truth filled relationships.

Sermon 2: Our first purpose is to glorify God in grace-and-truth filled relationships.

Sermon 3: Our second purpose is to give God pleasure.

Sermon 4: Our third purpose is to receive and return God's love.



1. WE WERE MADE TO BE LOVED BY GOD (9-10)

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that 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 (9-10).

God's love is **personal**. Not just that he has love, knows love, or does love but he is love.

God's love is **relational**. He wants to enter, maintain, and expand a close, connected relationship with us.

God's love is **true**. He's not pretending but is 100% sincere.

God's love is **demonstrated**. The greatest proof of his love is his sent Son, his dead Son, his resurrected Son.

God's love is **unstoppable**. It cannot be defeated, deflected or diverted even by the most enormous obstacle.

God's love is **faithful**. He keeps all his promises and will never betray us.

God's love is **holy**. It is the purest love that ever existed.

God's love is **life-giving**. It's a love that energizes and enlivens our life. It transforms us.

God's love is **gracious**. It's not a response to our love, but initiates it. It's not based on attraction but grace.

God's love is **forgiving**. He turns away his anger from us because he poured out his anger on his Son.

God's love is **infinite**. It's so immense that it cannot be measured.

God's love is **eternal**. God loved us before time began and will love us after time ends.

God's love is **unchangeable**. His love does not come and go or fluctuate up and down. It's steady and secure.

God's love is **practical**. He thinks about us all the time and how he can show us his love.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Are you loved by God? Keep yourself in the love of God (Jude 1:21). Dwell in it, live in it, bask in it, bathe in it. You were made to be loved by God and you will find your best life in his love. You can be loved by God and yet it has very little influence in your life. Amazingly, we can go long periods of time without any conscious thought about God's love for us. This passage calls us to very deliberately decide to spend time in God's love. As we do, we will realize, "This is why I was made. This is the purpose of my being on this earth."

Are you a stranger to God's love? You don't know it, you've never sought it, or experienced it. You are not loved by God. Wouldn't you like to enter into this love? Wouldn't you like to be loved by God? Wouldn't you like to fulfill your great purpose of being loved by God? Use this verse to get to the cross, confess your sins, and believe in God's cross-shaped heart of love. You will find a satisfaction there in God's love that you can never get in any human love.

GOD MADE US
IN LOVE FOR LOVE



I love being loved by God?
I'd love to love like God?



2. WERE MADE TO LOVE LIKE GOD (7-8, 11-12)

Love is from God. Lust is from hell, but "love is from God" (7). There is no love in the world apart from God. All love in the world has come from another world. All human love is the result of divine love. God's love is so vast that it overflows, spills over, and fills us. But we cannot contain it either, so it not only fills us, but overflows, spills over, and fills others too.

Love is commanded. The first command is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The second is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 23:36ff). John reminds us of this moral obligation twice. "Beloved let us love one another...We also ought to love one another" (7, 11). But God gives what he commands. He gushes so much love into our lives that the command to love others is like telling fish to swim or fire to burn.

Love proves the new birth. "Whoever loves has been born of God" (7). When a person loves like God did, with self-denial and self-sacrifice, it proves that a supernatural change has occurred in the heart. Where there is no love, there is no life, there has been no new birth. New birth connects us with God's life which flows into our lives.

Love proves we know God. "Whoever loves...knows God." We cannot know God and not love him and others. Knowledge of God always results in love for others. Love is far better than a bumper sticker or a cross as an identifier of a Christian. Conversely, "Anyone who does not love does not know God" (8).

Love makes God visible. "No one has ever seen God" (12), but when we love one another, God's love is seen. Our visible love for others makes God's invisible love visible.

Love increases love. "If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" (12). When we love others, love abides; it lingers, it dwells, it becomes a familiar presence and a close friend. When we love others, God's love is perfected, it is matured and purified in us. God's love for us increases our love for God and others, which increases our experience of God's love for us, and so on.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Cross-shaped love for God. This involves the **cross**, **commitment**, **cost** (self-sacrifice), **communication** (two-way), **compassion** (feeling), **care** (consideration, kindness), **carefulness** (sensitivity), **companionship** (just being together), **closeness** (vulnerable sharing and intimacy), **complimenting** (affirmation and praise).

Cross-shaped love for others. "Others" includes not just family and friends, but other Christians, the unloveable, and even our enemies. That love should never stop growing (Phil. 1:9). As with God, it involves the **cross**, **commitment**, **cost**, **communication**, **compassion**, **care**, **carefulness**, **companionship**, **closeness**, and **complimenting**. One love researcher found that four things kill relationships: repeated **criticism**, **contempt** (sarcasm, name-calling, mimicking, eye-rolling), being **defensive** (always trying to make excuses for their failures and slips), and **stonewalling**, (a person raises the drawbridge and cuts off communication so that it's like speaking to a brick wall).

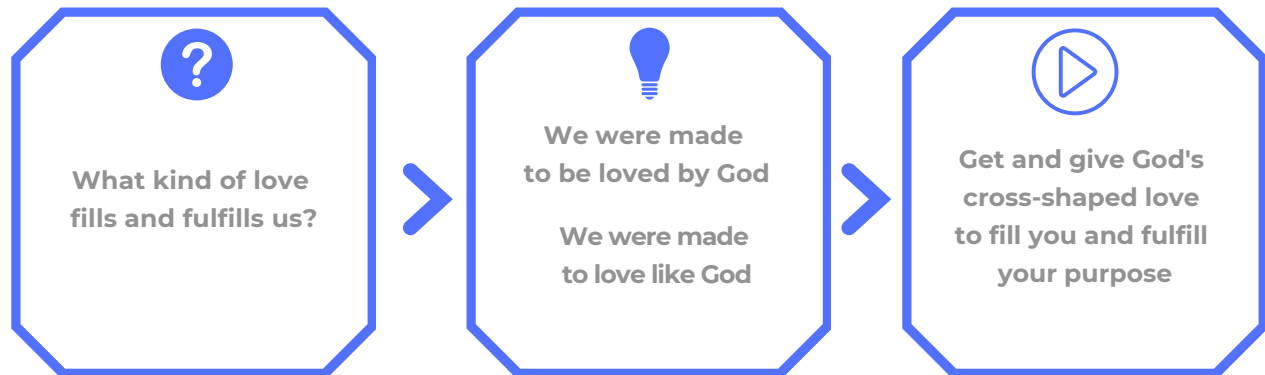
GOD IS LOVE.
AM I LOVE?



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

- Love **God** better: start by receiving his love better and abiding in his love deeper.
- Love your **family** better: wife/husband/parents/children) better.
- Love a **Christian** better: starting with your church family in First Byron).
- Love a **friend** better: old ones and new ones)
- Love a **neighbor** better: house neighbor, work neighbor,
- Love an **outsider** better: visitors, immigrants, the different
- Love the **poor** better: practically and financially through the church/charities
- Love an **enemy** better (Matt. 5:43-45)
- Love the **lost** better: get the Gospel to them urgently.

Prayer: Loving God, thank you for loving me with cross-shaped love. Help me to love you and others with cross-shaped love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Define love.
2. What have been your best experiences of love?
3. What does Jude 1:21 mean? How can you abide in God's love better?
4. What other Bible passages teach about how to love others?
5. How will you love better in the coming week?
6. What's the difference between cross-shaped love and secular love?

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