

acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God. In other words, the only people whom God lives in and who live in God are those who trust and love Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God who was sent as the Savior of the world and who love one another. Notice the logical sequence: Holy Spirit given to people, then these people behold Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world, then they bear witness and acknowledge that he is the Son of God sent by the Father as the Savior of the world, then they love others who make this same confession.

18. Is it important to you that God be made visible in the world by your loving other Christians? Why or why not?

Christians delight to love other Christians because the invisible God is made visible through our love.

19. What does it mean to have confidence on the “day of judgment”, v. 17?

It means that when Jesus comes back as the judge of the whole world we will not be afraid to stand before him. We won't be afraid of being rejected by him and sent to hell but will be confident that he will warmly welcome us into his eternal kingdom of peace and joy.

20. According to v. 17 what is it that will give us this confidence on that day?

If we are like him in this world and so have his love completed among us we will be confident when Jesus shows up. Jesus lived for the good of others to the glory of God. So we will have confidence on the day of judgment when we love others to the glory of God.

21. What should be the emotional condition of all those who are like Jesus and thus have his love completed in them?

They will not be afraid of the day of judgment. God's love is transforming and so when we are transformed we know that his love has been given to us. Therefore, we will not be afraid because God's love is perfected in us by our loving others just like Jesus did.

22. What is true of those who say they love God but don't love other Christians?

They are liars. They do not love God because no one can love God whom they cannot see while they hate other Christians whom they can see. The implication is that these people ought to be afraid and they cannot have confidence on the day of judgment.

23. Why is it that the person who hates, who does not love, Christians cannot love God? (Clue: see v. 7)

There are two reasons. First, every Christian has been born of God and therefore is a child of God. You cannot love the Father and then hate his children. The children are in the image of the Father and so if you are hating the image of God which you see, then you are only deceiving yourself if you think you are loving the God whom you cannot see. Second, the ability to love other Christians is only given to those who have been born of God. Just like a person who has not been born cannot breath, so the person who has not been born of God cannot love people and therefore cannot love God. Loving God and Christians are the fruit of being born of God, not the cause. Loving God and loving Christians always go together. You cannot have one without the other.

24. Do you hate or not love any Christian? If yes, what are you going to do about it?

Christians delight to love other Christians because we know there is a day of judgment.

Laden. We hate each other. I don't believe that the U.S. is perfect or that Osama bin Laden has no grounds for hating us. However, for purpose of the illustration I'm going to assume that the U.S. has only acted in love towards Osama and those who agree with him. In that case he has no grounds for hating us. He ought to trust us and love us. However, from our point of view, we are justified in hating him, in desiring his death. In fact, it would be unjust and wrong if we did not pursue punishing him. To say that God loves a sinner is like George Bush loving and forgiving Osama bin Laden. What the gospel says about God's kindness to sinners is like President Bush inviting him to come live in the White House and be his closest advisor. Wouldn't it be an offense against all that is right if our government flew Osama bin Laden to New York on Air Force One and then had a ticker tape parade for him right down the street in front of where the World Trade Center used to be? How could it ever be right to do that? That is a very small picture of what the Bible says God is going to do with millions of sinners. How is it right for God to do this? It is right for God to reward with eternal life those who have done nothing but commit acts of terror against him and his kingdom because he killed his very own Son for the sins of all those sinners whom he accepts into heaven. God's sending Jesus to die for our sins is the definition of love because his love is not conditioned upon anything in us. He is not loving us because of who we are or what we did but in spite of who we are and what we've done. His love is motivated by his delight in being loving not by what we will give him in return. His kindness is due to his joy in being a loving God not in the joy of being loved back.

10. How and why are we to love one another?

Love gladly meets the need of the beloved. Love initiates kindness toward the beloved irrespective of the response or "worthiness" of the beloved. We are to love out of the overflow of joy we have in being loved by God and out of our delight in loving. We do not love because we are expecting to get loved in return.

11. Does God's giving his Son as an atoning sacrifice motivate you to love other Christians? Why or why not?

12. Do you find it difficult to love others as God loved you, without requiring the other be "worthy" of your love?

Christians delight to love other Christians because we have experienced the love of God in Christ.

13. What does John tell us about God at the beginning of v. 12?

God is invisible. No one has ever seen God.

14. How many times in vv. 12-16 does John say "God lives in" a person and a person "lives in God"?

Seven times.

15. When you put together John's original statement that God is invisible with this emphasis on God's living in people and people living in God, what is the point of vv. 12-16?

How do we know if this invisible God is living in and among a group of people? That is the claim of every religious group. Every religion claims that God lives with them and in them uniquely. Every religion seeks to substantiate that claim in various ways. In vv. 12-16 John gives the answer as to how we know that the invisible God is living in us and we are living in him.

16. In v. 12, in what group of people does John say the invisible God lives?

He says that God lives in the "we who love one another".

17. Does that mean that God lives in any and every group that has a mutual affection for one another? Why or why not? (CLUE: See vv. 13-15)

No, God does not live in any and every group that has a mutual affection for one another. The only group of people who live in God and in whom God lives are those who have been given the Holy Spirit and who love one another. How do you know who has been given the Holy Spirit? Those who have been given the Holy Spirit behold that the Father has sent the Son into the world to be the Savior of the world and they bear witness to this fact. All who have been given the Spirit

do fish live in the water? It is because they have been born of a fish. Why do Christians love other Christians? It is because they have been born of God, who is love.

3. EXTRA CREDIT: What else is true of those who “have been born of God” according to these verses in 1 John?

- 2:29 *They practice righteousness (NIV= “do what is right”)*
- 3:9 *They do not continue to sin, they cannot go on sinning. This doesn't mean Christians never sin but rather that their life is not characterized by sin any longer. See 1:8-10.*
- 5:1 *They believe that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the OT*
- 5:4 *They overcome the world by their faith*
- 5:18 *They do not continue to sin and are kept safe from the evil one.*

4. Do you desire to love other Christians? Does loving other Christians seem “natural” to you?

Christians delight to love other Christians because it is in our genetic code.

5. In v. 11 what is the reason we are to love one another?

The verse literally says, “Beloved one, if God so loved us we also ought to love one another.” We are to love one another because God so loved us.

6. Verses 9-10 describe both how it is that God loved us and why it is that his loving us in this way should motivate us to love one another. In v. 9 how did God love us and what was his purpose in loving us in this way? (NOTE: What does John mean by the term “world”? See 2:15-17, 3:1, 3:12-13, 4:1, 3, 4)

The first thing we are told about God's love is that it was his love for us that motivated him to send his only Son into the world. In this simple language is revealed a most amazing thing. The eternal Son of God who is absolutely holy and worthy of all honor and praise and adoration, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or ever can see, became a man. He took on human flesh and came and lived among us. He condescended to live as one of his creatures and to experience everything that human beings experience except for

sin. When John says he entered the world, he is not merely referring to the physical planet upon which we live. Rather he is talking about human society as it exists in rebellion to God and under the leadership of Satan. Jesus didn't enter the world as the Allied Forces entered Paris in WWII to the gratitude of the French people. Jesus entered the world the way the US army entered Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown. He came out of his love for us but he came into a world that didn't love him. He entered into a world that hates him and his ways. Notice at the end of v. 9 that he did it in order to give us life. He came to the world that he made but which hates him in order that he might give life to his people. God's love for us aims at our eternal well-being. He loves us and sent his son into the world so that we could live forever.

7. According to v. 10 what does not show us what love is? Why is this the case?

It is not astounding that we have loved God. Loving God is what we were made to do. How could anyone not love God who is love? God is the only being in the universe that ought to be loved. He is infinitely lovely. What is there not to love in God? The world's hatred of God is not reasonable. For example, from our point of view it makes no sense that any Iraqi would hate the U.S. We have removed a butcher and we want to help them rebuild their country and develop a free and open society. If we presume that we are acting out of noble and good purposes it makes no sense for the Iraqi's to hate us because we're simply trying to give them life. Presuming pure motives on our part it is not surprising if the Iraqi people love us.

8. What is it that shows love?

What is amazing is that God loves us. What is shocking, stunning, beyond belief is that God, who has every reason to hate us, sent his son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins so that he can justly be kind to us.

9. Why is God sending Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for our sins the definition of love?

The condition that exists between human beings in their natural state and God is the condition that exists between the U.S. and Osama bin

GOD'S NEW COMMUNITY
BORN TO LOVE
1 John 4: 7-21

Please review this week's catechism question.

Did you meet anyone new this past Sunday after worship?

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had a friendship or other relationship “go bad”? Why are quality, long-term relationships so difficult to maintain?

Everyone wants to be a part of a loving family, have loving friends and belong to a loving church. However, all of us have experienced the apparently inevitable downward cycle of human relationships. We begin a new relationship full of affection and delight in the other person. We are thoughtful of one another's wants and needs. We spend as much time as possible together. We are in the romance stage of friendship. However, eventually the other person, the group we've joined, offends or disappoints us in some way. We begin to feel resentful. We ask, “Why don't they love me the way they used to or the way they promised to?” We begin to withdraw. Maybe we begin to complain. Finally, if nothing is done to reverse the downward cycle our resentment becomes rejection and we break off the relationship.

I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that everyone who joins a church expects it to be loving community. However, as every honest person knows, the church is a disappointing place when you enter it expecting to be loved by others. The biblical writers know this. That is why, in the passage before us today, the apostle John spends so much time giving us reasons to love one another. He knows the human heart. If your love for other Christians depends upon their response to you, then you will never persist in loving other Christians. You will either stop going to church, float from church to church or you will remain an anonymous, perfunctory member of a church. One of the major things that John does in this little letter of his is show us why it is that Christians delight to love other Christians.

STUDY

1. In verse seven John commands Christians in a local church to love one another. According to the rest of v. 7 and v. 8 why should Christians love one another?

The foundation of his argument is that God is the source of love for others because God is love. Therefore, the person who has been born of God and who knows God loves other Christians.

2. Describe the relationship between “having been born of God” and loving other Christians. Consider the metaphor of birth and that you “have been born of your parents.” Why is it that every true Christian delights to love other Christians?

At a point in the past I became born. I wasn't born and then I was born, at a point in time. I continue in the state of “born-ness”. Additionally, I didn't cause myself to be born. Someone or something else caused my birth. Obviously, in the statement, it is God who was the agent and cause of my spiritual birth. Every Christian, at a point in time, is given the very life of God. We are born again by the mercy of God. Just like we had nothing to do with our physical birth we had nothing to do with our spiritual birth. We didn't decide to be born or assist in any way. God caused us to be born and we continue in a state of being born.

The analogy between spiritual birth and physical birth is very helpful. Each one of us can say that we have been born of our parents. Certain things are true of each of us. I have a specific genetic makeup due to who my parents are. I have a particular history. I am related to a particular family. I have a particular inheritance to which I will be entitled. You can discover who my parents are by discovering these particular things that are true of me. Especially through DNA testing you can determine who my parents are. That is the exact argument that John is using in this passage and in fact he uses throughout his letter.

Christian delight to love other Christians, because they can't help themselves. They want to love other Christians. It makes them happy to do so. It is in their nature to do so. It is part of their genetic code. Why do horses not like to eat meat but love to eat hay? It is in their genetic code. It is what they do because they have been born of a horse. Why