

NT Lesson # 44
God is Love
1, 2, 3 John

by Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION:

My Mission President in Brazil gave what I have long considered to be the best definition of love I have ever heard. He said, “Love is caring more about someone else’s happiness than you care about your own.” I have come to believe and see that this description of love is accurate. Consider the actions of Christ, who loved us and the Father so much that when confronted with the garden and the cross, he carried on. Remember that he pled for the Father, if possible, to find another way, but went forward in spite of immeasurable pain to do the thing he had been sent to do . . . “Hereby perceive we the love of Christ, because he laid down his life for us . . .” (1 John 3:16, JST) The Savior’s will was “swallowed up in the will of the Father.” (Mosiah 15:7)

Abinadi before King Noah, had he been concerned only with his own happiness, could have walked away a free man. “*Your Majesty, I probably made a mistake. I’d like to recall all those unkind things I said about you. I am sure you are very righteous.*” (See Mosiah 17:8) But Abinadi was more concerned with pleasing someone else than he was with taking care of himself.

But I finish my message; and then it matters not whither I go, if it so be that I am saved [in the Kingdom of God]. (Mosiah 13:9)

Paul suffered stripes, and prisons, and beatings with rods, and stoning and shipwreck. He experienced perils and weariness and painfulness and hunger and thirst and cold and nakedness, and all of this while burdened with the responsibility to care for the churches. (2 Cor. 11:23-28) But he carried on because of his love, a word he uses 80 times in his epistles.

There are a hundred examples of such love in the scriptures and in our literature. I think I first began to experience this kind of love when I married and had children. I knew, holding and loving and watching my family, that I really loved

them more than I loved myself. Like the father who sacrificed his own life to push a child from the path of a speeding car; like the grandfather who attacked a bear with a flashlight so that his granddaughter could get free; like the Savior who freed us from the grasp of those awful monsters death and hell (see 2 Nephi 9:10) the happiness and welfare and safety of my family were more important to me than my own.

The major theme of the three epistles of John is love. As you read, you will see the word “love” many times. Watch for teachings about the love of the Father for us, the love of the Son for us, and especially watch for ways in which we can show our love for them both.

John also speaks of the blessings we can expect if we learn to love others in the manner he suggests. Look for those blessings and ponder their presence or absence in your own life

As you study the following scripture accounts, ponder the ways in which these scriptures apply to your own life. Reflect on experiences that help you understand the scriptural principles. Do not neglect to record in your journals those things that the Spirit teaches you as you immerse yourself in the word of God.

I. THE FATHER MANIFESTS HIS LOVE FOR US BY PREPARING A PLAN BY WHICH WE MAY BECOME LIKE HIM.

If you were to use just one word to describe the Father, what word would you use? What word did John use? (1 John 4:8,16)

What do we learn about God’s love for us in 1 John 3:1,2?

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1,2).

How did the Father manifest his love for us? What did the Father do to enable us

to become like him? (1 John 4:9,10,14)

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins . . . And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (1 John 4:9,10,14).

In what way is the mission of the Son a manifestation of the Father's love for us?

Notice the language of 1 Nephi 11:21,22:

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.

What ultimate gift will we receive because the Father sent the Son into the world?

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. (1 John 2:25).

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (1 John 5:11).

What other remarkable thing is the Father willing to do for us because of his love?

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:14,15).

II. THE SAVIOR MANIFESTS HIS LOVE THROUGH HIS

WILLINGNESS TO FULFILL THE FATHER'S PLAN.

What is the first manifestation of the Savior's love for us that John mentions in his epistle?

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness(1 John 1:7-9; See also 1 John 3:5) What does John indicate we must we do to receive this great blessing? (1 John 1:7-9).

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin (1 John 3:5).

How does the Savior manifest his love for us in his interaction with the father?

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments (1 John 2:2-3).

What does the Savior, as our advocate, do for us?

Notice how the language of D&C 45:3-5 sheds even more light on this remarkable gift of the Savior to us:

Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him--Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.

In what other way does the Savior manifest his love for us? (1 John 3:8) How do the Savior's life and teachings destroy the works of the devil?

What was it necessary for the Savior to do in order to show his love for us in the manner we have discussed?

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16).

III. WE MANIFEST OUR LOVE FOR THE FATHER AND THE SON BY OUR OBEDIENCE AND OUR LOVE OF OUR FELLOW MEN.

John indicates that there are three major ways in which we can show our love for the Father and the Son.

A. What is the first of these ways?

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:3-6; see also 3:22,24; 5:2,3; 2 John 1:6).

Why is obedience the greatest manifestation of our love for the Father and the Son? Earlier we learned that the Father shows his love for us by answering our prayers. What gift of love do we give the Father in order to receive these answers?

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:22).

B. What is the second way we show our love for the Father and the Son?

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is

not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Why is it unprofitable to fall in love with the world? If we really believe that we can be like the Father and the Son, what will we do?

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:2,3).

C. What is the third way mentioned by John in which we show our love for the Father and the Son?

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes (2:10,11)

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another . . . We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death . . . Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (3:11, 14, 16-18).

If we claim to love the Father and the Son, but do not love our brothers, what does John say we are?

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 4:20, 21).

What are some of the ways we are instructed to show our love for our brothers?

John wrote: “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” (1 John 3:11; see also 1 John 4:21)

Note that it is not enough to declare our love. Words are wonderful, but when works are needed, works will not supply their place. When the handcart pioneers were stranded on the frozen plains of Wyoming, the Saints no doubt prayed for them, but in addition, they sent wagons to the rescue. That is the kind of love we must be willing to offer. John wrote, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; *but in deed* and in truth.” (1 John 3:18, emphasis added)

There is a great difference between saying “I love you” and living “I love you.” What is one of the great evidences that we have passed from death into life?

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death (1 John 3:14).

How much love should we have for our brethren?

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16).

What activities are suggested in D&C 123:13 that are comparable to *laying down our lives*?

Therefore, that we should waste and wear out our lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness, wherein we know them; and they are truly manifest from heaven—(D&C 123:13).

How do these endeavors manifest our love for our brethren?

Besides exposing the “hidden things of darkness” to those around us, what other things must we offer if we are partakers of this love?

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need,

and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (1 John 3:17).

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (1 John 4:7,8)

CONCLUSION:

What are the blessings of living in a family whose members love one another as they have been taught? John indicates that there are blessings if we learn to love as the Father and the Son love. Note the blessings the following verses promise?

1 John 3:21--"Confidence toward God"

1 John 4:17--"Boldness in the day of judgement"

1 John 4:18--"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."

What does John indicate is the greatest joy of a righteous parent?

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth (3 John 1:4).

This verse suggests that you have the opportunity to bring great joy to the Father. What must you do?

Will you do it?

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