



# PURE LOVE

WEEK 3  
03.19.17

## FOCUS VERSE

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### I John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

## FOCUS TEXT

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### I John 4:7-21

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 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.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 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?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.



## FOCUS THOUGHT

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Pure love allows one to walk the path of righteousness without fear.



# CULTURE CONNECTION

## God Is Pure Love

**T**he Scriptures are clear in their declaration: “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). Of all God’s characteristics and of all God is, surely the greatest is that He is love—pure love.

Unfortunately, however, we humans tend to evaluate love on the basis of what another does for us rather than on the knowledge alone of that love. In other words, we tend to view love through a very self-centered lens of interpretation. The love of God is not quantified by what we perceive Him to allow to occur in our lives; rather, God’s love is a matter of unchanging fact. He is love. Period.

Pastor Everett Henes wrote about our dangerous evaluation of God’s love in his article titled “Doubting God’s Love Comes Easy.”

Henes wrote, “Sometimes it is easy to doubt God’s love for us. We equate good things happening in our lives with God’s blessing and bad things happening with God’s displeasure. This is a dangerous approach to our walk with God” ([www.hillsdale.net](http://www.hillsdale.net), *Hillsdale Daily News*, accessed November 9, 2015).

Too often we apply imperfect, flawed human standards to the understanding and evaluation of divine love. God’s love is not shackled by human imperfections or our human inability to fully comprehend it. Rather, His love is pure, flawless, perfect love. It does not depend on any current circumstances in our lives. We know He is love regardless of life’s experiences.

### OUTLINE

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#### I. GOD IS LOVE

- A. God Loves Us
- B. We Love God
- C. Our Love Is Made Perfect

#### II. PURE LOVE

- A. Purity of Love
- B. Love Properly Focused

#### III. RESTORATION TO PURE LOVE

- A. The Father’s Pure Love
- B. Return to Thy First Love

### CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

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Burt Bacharach and Hal David wrote a song titled, “What the World Needs Now Is Love.” The song identifies love as “the only thing that there’s just too little of.” Though the song is true, relatively few people know what true love is. However, serious students of Scripture know because the Bible reveals that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16).

Not only do relatively few people comprehend the essence of true love, but many have corrupted love and propagated a warped and twisted idea of what love is. These individuals

promote a kind of perverted love that seeks self-fulfillment. However, Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth that love (KJV, charity) is longsuffering, kind, without envy, not self-seeking, unprovoked, and without evil thoughts (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). He further maintained that love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth (1 Corinthians 13:6). Paul said love is a positive force, for it bears all things, believes all things, and in all things exhibits hope and endurance (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8). In short, true and genuine love is pure!

Equipped with the knowledge that God is love and His love is pure, believers have a great responsibility to endeavor to spread the knowledge of God wherever they can throughout the world. It is a matter of carrying the true message of pure love to all human beings.

### SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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#### I. GOD IS LOVE

In the Scriptures we can discover many qualities or attributes of God. For example, the Bible reveals God is light (1 John 1:5) and

God is holy (I Corinthians 3:17). However, perhaps none of the stated attributes of God are more powerful and impacting upon our lives than the attribute of His love. As stated earlier, “God is love” (I John 4:8, 16). Not only is God love, but He also exercises His love toward humanity.

## A. God Loves Us

It is rare in our world that a person willingly and sacrificially loses his life in the act of protecting or rescuing another individual. Occasionally we hear of such heroic acts when one endeavors to save the life of another, but such an action is basically counter to the innate survival instinct of humans. Consequently, we view such individuals as heroes in their efforts to save or rescue others. But in the case of Jesus Christ, He died for us when we had nothing to offer Him and certainly did not deserve such intervention. Paul observed these truths in his letter to the believers in Rome (Romans 5:1–8).

*“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7–8).*

*“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).*

*“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” (I John 3:16).*

One simply cannot deny the demonstrated love of God for humanity. People might say they never have felt or experienced God’s love, or they might testify that they have encountered a sense of God’s disfavor in some fashion. However, nobody can deny that Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of mankind demonstrated a measure of love otherwise unknown throughout history. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

## B. We Love God

*“We love him, because he first loved us” (I John 4:19).*

How can one refuse to return the love of God? Clearly, some individuals do not love God, do not return His demonstrated love, and do not seem to care about Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death. How anyone can be so demonstrably calloused and unaffected by the love of God is a mystery.

For believers, however, there is no mystery. They love Jesus because He first loved them. They desire to show their love through a life of service to Christ and His church. It seems only right and reasonable that we would love in return the One who so selflessly showed His love for us. We have the opportunity to demonstrate our stated love through a life of dedicated service to the Lord, which is a reasonable action considering His devoted love for us. (See Romans 12:1–2.)

## C. Our Love Is Made Perfect

*“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world” (I John 4:17).*

*“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5).*

Love is a wonderful quality. Expressions of true love toward others normally are warmly welcomed. This is the expected result when a person understands and experiences the love of Jesus Christ. Love, however, is deeper when a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit. (See Romans 5:5.) We may not fully understand how this happens or works within the believer, but the Word assures us His love is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”

The result of God’s love affecting and influencing the hearts of believers is that their love is perfected—that is, it becomes pure love delivered by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Spirit-filled believers do not fear judgment but instead experience bold confidence because of their relationship with Christ.

*“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).*

## II. PURE LOVE

### A. Purity of Love

*“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:11).*

*“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (II Timothy 2:22).*

When we receive the Holy Ghost, we are filled with the Spirit of God and His love, which produce His righteousness within us. Our righteousness is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), but His righteousness within us is pure and holy. Further, His righteousness produces spiritual fruit within our lives (Philippians 1:11; II Timothy 2:22). Among those characteristics produced within us by the righteousness of Christ is a pure heart absent of fear and with right motives and the desire to express His love to others without intimidation.

1. *No fear.* “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4:18). The love of God frees us from fear. That does not mean we never experience caution or concern over situations in life or that we are reckless and careless in our lifestyles. Rather it means we are not haunted, controlled, or terrorized by immobilizing, irrational fears. Satan attempts to initiate and exploit fear in us to limit our effectiveness and to torment us. When the love of God rules our lives, however, His perfect love subdues and dominates human fear—casting it out along with the torment it produces.

2. *Freedom of expression.* The love of Christ within us frees us to express His love and goodness to others who have not yet experienced salvation. We become aligned with the pure and holy mission of Christ in

this world: to be witnesses for Him and to reach others with the saving message of His gospel. Even individuals who are shy and timid about speaking to others experience boldness and freedom to share the love of Jesus. They recognize the life-changing power of the gospel, and they want others to have the same opportunity to experience and enjoy redemption.

*“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).*

3. *Love motivates.* “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead” (II Corinthians 5:14). The pure love of Jesus Christ becomes a force of motivation within believers. Because He loved us and saved us, we love Him in return—and we love His message and mission of spreading that holy love to people everywhere. It is the reason God’s people love to give to and go on missionary endeavors. It is the reason why believers want to become involved in local outreach programs and evangelistic efforts. They just want to share Jesus with their world because His love has motivated them to go forth with His message. (See Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:46–47.)

### B. Love Properly Focused

When believers receive the Holy Spirit, they become empowered by the pure love of Jesus Christ within. Christ’s love effects many spiritual works within us, not the least of which is a refocusing of His pure love and its influences within our lives. We can identify at least three dramatic changes the Spirit brings about within us.

1. *Love God.* Receiving the Spirit causes us to truly love God in a dimension never known before. We can witness this in part by studying the life of Peter. Before Peter had the opportunity to receive the Holy Ghost, Jesus quizzed him regarding his measure of love for the Lord. (See John 21:12–19.) Jesus asked Peter three times whether he loved Him, and we readily notice that Jesus first instructed Peter to “feed my lambs,” and the other two

times He instructed Peter to “feed my sheep.” However, the more dramatic element of their conversation had to do with the measure of Peter’s love for Him, which is not apparent within English translations of the Bible.

The first two times Jesus quizzed Peter regarding his love, Jesus used a verb form of the Greek word *agape*, which is defined as “to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). Thayer further stated it is “a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem.” Simply, the Greek *agape* for which Jesus was looking is the supreme measure of love, respect, commitment, and devotion. However, Peter was able to respond only with the Greek word *phileo*, which means “to love; to be friendly to one. . . . an inclination prompted by sense and emotion” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). Thayer goes on to observe that “love as an emotion cannot be commanded, but only love as a choice.” Whereas *agape* is by devotion, commitment, and choice, *phileo* is by feeling, sense, and emotion because it “feels” like the right thing to do. God, however, is looking for our commitment of love for Him.

We should not be quick to condemn Peter for his response to Jesus, however. We should recall that only hours before, Peter had denied knowing or being associated with Jesus at all, a denial over which Peter wept bitterly after the fact. Interestingly, however, in Peter’s first epistle he spoke unabashedly of his committed and devoted love (*agape*) for Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:8). In the same chapter he spoke of emotional love (*phileo*) for “the brethren,” as well as his admonition that believers love (*agape*) “one another with a pure heart fervently” (I Peter 1:22). When God fills us with His Holy Spirit, only then are we really capable of giving to others the highest measure of committed, devoted love, for only then do we love from a “pure heart fervently.” Peter was unable to express such love until after he had received the Spirit.

When Paul spoke of “the love of God” being “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 5:5), it is not surprising he used the Greek word *agape*, indicating that the love God gives us by His Spirit is the highest level and measure of pure love.

*Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure—  
The saints’ and angels’ song.  
—Frederick M. Lehman, 1917*

2. *Love not the world.* In addition to the Holy Spirit empowering us to love with deeply committed pure love, He also motivates us to avoid giving our love to the worldly systems of this life. The Spirit teaches us to love people and use things, not love things and use people.

*“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” (I John 2:15–16).*

The substance of the “things that are in the world” consists of the same fundamental elements that first tempted and enticed Adam and Eve in the Garden: (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride of life. Eve saw “the tree was good for food” (lust of the flesh), “that it was pleasant to the eyes” (lust of the eyes), and it was “a tree to be desired to make one wise” (pride of life). Then “she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6).

3. *Love one another.* We are to love God and abstain from loving the world, but it is our love for one another that clearly marks us as disciples of Jesus Christ. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). How can we claim to be believers and disciples of Jesus Christ if we do not love our fellow believers?

*“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. . . . 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?” (I John 4:7, 11, 20).*

### III. RESTORATION TO PURE LOVE

#### A. The Father's Pure Love

Nothing can match the love of parents for their children. God put a special connection in their hearts for their offspring, which normally creates a strong bond of love between them.



**At the time of this writing, there is an amazing video clip on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) that brilliantly illustrates the love of a father for his son. A father, who is apparently suffering the early stages of dementia, is sitting on a bench with his adult son. While the son is reading his newspaper, his father is merely sitting on the bench enjoying the beautiful day. Suddenly, a bird rustles in the bushes and the father asks, "What is that?" The son quickly, and at the edge of annoyance, responds, "It was a sparrow." The father asks the same question three more times with the son becoming more and more agitated each time, until finally the son yells at his dad in anger.**

**With sadness the father gets up and goes into the house where he retrieves a journal and returns with it in hand. He points to a passage in the journal, instructing his son to read the entry. A few days after his son had turned three years old, he and his dad were sitting on a park bench when the son asked his father the same question about a sparrow. Although the son asked his father twenty-one times successively, each time the father answered him patiently and hugged him. Upon reading the entry in the journal, the son regretted his shortness with his dad, and he was ashamed of his response toward him. He hugged his father for a long time, just holding onto him. How demonstrative of the love of a parent!**

What love parents have for their children! Patience and longsuffering are necessary, and sometimes a child will break the parents' hearts. But the pure love God has given parents for their children is strong and enduring—virtually indestructible.

The Scriptures tell the story of a prodigal son who said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me" (Luke 15:12). Indeed, the father gave his son the requested inheritance, and the son went into a distant country where he wasted everything his father had given him. He was living it up until suddenly he ran out of money, and "he began to be in want" (Luke 15:14).

Now destitute, the son found a job feeding pigs, and at times he was tempted to fill himself with the very food with which he was feeding them. One can only imagine the hunger he must have endured to be tempted to eat that which he was feeding to the hogs. Obviously, he was desperate when he finally came to his senses.

*"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:17–19).*

Perhaps the most beautiful aspect of this parable is the perspective of the father. The son's father never gave up hope his son would one day return home. In fact, on the very day the boy was heading home, the father saw him coming while the son was still a great distance away. "His father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). Further, the father prepared a feast to celebrate the return of his son.

Nothing can adequately describe the pure, untainted love of our heavenly Father! He loved us so much that He "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The Father's love for humanity was the basis for the Incarnation so that He could redeem us through the sacrificial death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. What love! And not only did He give His life to redeem us, He has demonstrated His eternal love for us by calling us His sons (1 John 3:1). How could we ever doubt His pure love?

## B. Return to Thy First Love

The pure love of God, which we receive by the Spirit of the Lord, is the foundation of our relationship with Him. It is indispensable and irreplaceable. Nothing can substitute for it, and without it we could never please the Lord.

In the Book of Revelation, the Lord directed John to write to the seven churches of Asia, and He told John what to write. In the first letter, written to the angel of the church in Ephesus, the Lord noted several admirable traits: (1) their works, (2) their labor, (3) their patience, (4) that they could not bear those who were evil, (5) that they had discerned those who falsely claimed to be apostles, (6) that they had labored for His namesake, and (7) that they had not fainted (Revelation 2:2–3). However, the Lord had one thing against them: they had left their first love.

*“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:4–5).*

The Lord’s word for the church in Ephesus—and for all who find themselves in the same condition—was to repent and do their first works, returning to their first love for Jesus Christ. The only basis for a relationship

with Jesus is through the pure love He bestows upon us through the Holy Ghost. We must hold to that pure love and never let it go. Should we ever discover His love lacking in our lives, we must return to it. It is the only foundation upon which we can build and have relationship with Jesus.

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

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The Bible reveals that if we love God, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). There is no basis for arguing that we love Jesus Christ if we are unwilling to do that which pleases Him, keeping the commandments He has given us through His Word.

*“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:3–5).*

Faith requires action. (See James 2:14–18.) Our behavior and actions demonstrate our faith in Jesus Christ. Our keeping the commandments Christ has given us demonstrates our pure and unfeigned love for Him. Together, they serve to give us the victory we need to live and overcome in this life. ■

## REFLECTIONS

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- Discuss some of the attributes or qualities of God. Why do we tend to think of love as possibly His greatest attribute?
- How is human love perfected as discussed in this lesson?
- What are three characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit produced within us by the righteousness of Jesus Christ?
- Discuss three dramatic changes when by the Holy Ghost the pure love of Christ brings new focus to our lives.
- What is the fundamental foundation of our relationship with Jesus Christ? Discuss.