

God is Love



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Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4: 7-10

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This year's theme is **Christ should be our first love because God first loved us**. The Doulos felt this was an extremely important topic because it's easy to go through life without really loving God and without really truly understanding God's love. So this semester we'll be talking about who Christ is, and how His love shines through who he is.

Today, we'll be talking about how God is Love! But first, we must understand what love really means. What is *true* love? Let's look at the verse.

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Two things to get from this passage. First, the not-so obvious: verse 10: Can we love? Yeah, but our love is nothing compared to the love Christ has for you. It's like you loving your parents. Your parents forever will do more than you can ever do for them. Your love is nothing much compared to theirs. Similarly, our love is nothing compared to God's love for us! That's why to say "we love God" is not enough to describe God's love. It's that God loves us first! Knowing this, we know how we might be able to love him back.

The second thing to get is John 3:16-17.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

I want to look at verse 17, because people never memorize 17! God did not send Jesus to tell us how we've messed up. That's not his main purpose. The goal is to save the world because we can't save ourselves! Why did he bother sending Jesus? Because (vs. 16) he loved us. He loved us ever since he created Adam. And yes, even after Adam and Eve messed up, he still loved them. Otherwise, he would've just destroyed them! Why bother with people that just messes up all the time? Just get it over with and destroy them! But God didn't—because he loved Adam and Eve before he created them. In fact, Love existed before Adam and Eve did. How? God is love! To prove that, all you need to see is Jesus.

And what is love? **Love is this: it's a commitment to the well-being of the object of love.** So, you can see why it's silly to love material things. You see why it's silly to love good grades. It's not like if you didn't "take care of your A's" then they'll become B's. So the first lesson to learn today is this, and John took care of it 2 chapters ago...

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2: 15-17)

The older you get, the harder this truth becomes to follow, because you see more and more of the world and the world looks more and more beautiful. When I was in high school and college, everyone wanted to be a financial analyst—it makes the most money! That was

true until 2 weeks ago. Hundreds and thousands of financial analysts lost their jobs because people got greedy. This world changes fast. If you love this world, this world will only disappoint you.

Let's go back to commitment. So if we can't love the world or anything in it, we can love others, right? And that's a noble thing. Today, so many people don't care about others. So what if there are poor people in the world? Their business. So what if there are unborn babies who are killed through abortion/ Too bad, so sad. Our world has very little love in it. **So loving God means we have to love our neighbors—everybody!**

But wait! That came from Mark 12:31. The verse says: love your neighbors **as yourself**. You can't love others if you don't love yourself. What does it mean to love yourself? To want the best for yourself, right? Now, it sounds easy, but I'm talking about wanting what is **truly** the best for you. So I'm not talking the biggest house, the most money, things like that.

But let me talk quickly about that because we live in a time where people struggle with self-image, self-confidence, and self-issues. We don't look *hot* enough, or *buff* enough, or *attractive* enough. Maybe we see ourselves as somehow "deficient" because we don't have a boy/girlfriend, or we see ourselves as dumb because you didn't get straight A's and everyone else at youth group did. Let me tell you that to love yourself does **NOT** mean you have to be the head honcho. It does **NOT** mean you must own everything, from the coolest fastest cars to the latest iPhone. For you girls it does **NOT** mean you must have guys staring at you and going "oh she's so hot..." For you guys it does **NOT** mean you must have lots of girls next to you going "Oooh, you're so buff and strong!" Let me tell you, and NEVER, NEVER FORGET THIS, that **Jesus loves you as you are!** He will not leave you as is—he will change you, but if you get more A's, if you look hotter, if you look like dirt, if you whatever, he will love you **just the same**.

So if you really love yourself, you want what's truly best for you. Question: what is truly best for you? What do you really need? You only need Jesus. I'll be spending the next few BDG's convincing you guys that all you need is Jesus, so stay tuned!

So we've come back full circle! To love others, you need to love yourself. To love yourself, you need to love God. But can we truly love God if our love is nothing compared to his love for us? Can we truly love God when he loved us first? Well, not really, but **the best we can do is accept his love in gratitude and pass it forward.**

What does it mean to do that? We'll talk about that in your BDGs. Let's pray.