

## Briefing Document: 1 John Lesson 28

Date: July 23, 2025

This document summarizes key themes from “1 John Lesson 28,” focusing on the biblical commandment to love, as expressed through the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and its ongoing manifestation in the lives of believers.

### I. The "Newness" of the Commandment to Love

Though the commandment to love has always been central to Scripture ("love your neighbor as yourself"), it gained new dimension and clarity through the life and example of Jesus Christ.

- Love Personified in Christ
  - “Never had the world seen a perfect love until Jesus showed it to them.”
  - Before Christ, God’s love was understood only in part — a shadow of what was to come.
  - Jesus, as “the substance of who God is,” revealed love in its fullness and perfection.
- Love to Perfection
  - Jesus “loved His disciples to the very end” (John 13:1), interpreted as loving them perfectly.
  - He promised them:
    - The Holy Spirit (John 14:16)
    - A prepared place (John 14:2–3)
    - His return (John 14:3)
  - His humility, including washing the feet of all His disciples — even Judas — reflected the depth of His love (John 13:5).
- Love Manifested in Believers
  - The commandment is “new in you” as well. When someone becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes residence in their life.
  - Believers receive all the fruit of the Spirit — with love listed first (Galatians 5:22).
  - Romans 5:5 (NKJV): "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
  - This love enables believers to express godly love toward others — both the saved and the lost.
- The Overlapping Kingdom
  - The arrival of Christ inaugurated the kingdom of light, which is now dispelling the darkness.

- We live in an overlapping age — present yet moving toward the coming fullness of God’s kingdom.
- Believers are citizens of this end-times kingdom, called to live by the love Christ revealed.

## II. Love as a Way of Life and Proof of Faith

Love is not an abstract idea but a lived-out reality. It serves as a clear marker of authentic Christian faith.

- Love as Proof
  - 1 John 2:9–11 (NKJV): "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him."
  - The test is unmistakable:
    - If you claim to know God but harbor hatred, you are still in darkness.
    - Love is the evidence of true spiritual light.
- Pure Heart and Holy Deeds
  - True love must be tethered to sound doctrine and holy living.
  - Claims of love are empty if not accompanied by righteous action.
  - A pure heart is necessary: "Love is the proof, and love proves everything."
- Contrast with Gnosticism
  - The Gnostics professed spiritual superiority yet disdained others — a counterfeit love.
  - True Christians are often “not noble” or “mighty” by worldly standards, but they understand and embody what the world desperately needs.
  - Their love for the lost should bring them to heartfelt compassion, not elitism.
- Practical Manifestations of Love
  - Love is the direction of your life, shaping intentions and behaviors.
  - Love means:
    - Serving others rather than demanding from them.
    - Helping others rather than harming them.
    - Lifting others up rather than stepping over them.
  - This is especially true among fellow believers.
- Love Prevents Stumbling
  - When we love others, “there is no cause for stumbling” — meaning we are not sinning against them.

- Stumbling is understood as sinning against another person.
- Though perfect love is unattainable, believers should feel remorse when they fail to love well.

### III. Key Takeaways

- Jesus' Love as the Standard:

Jesus is the perfect model of love, demonstrating what no one before Him ever could.

- Inward Transformation:

The newness of the love commandment is about more than Christ's example — it's about the Holy Spirit empowering believers from within.

- Love as an External Sign:

The presence (or absence) of love in a believer's life is a clear indication of their spiritual state:

- Love = in the light.
- Hatred = in darkness.

- Practical Application:

Love is not theoretical — it's active:

- Serving others.
- Lifting them up.
- Refraining from harm or exploitation.

- Ongoing Journey:

Though no one loves perfectly, the believer's life should be aimed in the direction of love, and they should respond with repentance and humility when they fall short.

### Greek Word(s) Used

#### 1. Agapē (ἀγάπη)

- Phonetic: ah-GAH-pay

- Definition: A selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love — the kind of love that God has for humanity and that believers are called to show. It is the highest form of love in Scripture and distinct from emotional affection or romantic desire.