

Briefing Document: 1 John 4-Lesson 75-“Exhibiting Perfect Love”

Wednesday-September 2, 2026

Executive Summary

This briefing document analyzes a study on the fourth chapter of 1 John, focusing on the concept of "perfect love" as a defining characteristic of the Christian life. The core premise is that love is not a human invention but an essential attribute of God's nature. The document outlines three primary reasons why believers are commanded to exhibit this love: it is God's essence, it was manifested through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, and it serves as the primary testimony to an unseen God.

Key insights include:

- **The Definition of Love:** God defines love through His character and actions; humans do not have the authority to redefine it.
- **Universal vs. Perfect Love:** While God shows "common grace" and compassion to all humanity, His "perfect love" is an eternal, life-giving bond reserved for His children.
- **The Propitiation of Christ:** The sacrifice of Jesus serves as both the payment for sin and the ultimate model of selfless love.
- **The Believer's Role:** Because God is invisible, the world perceives His nature primarily through the sacrificial love shared between believers within the church fellowship.

The Essence of God: Love as a Divine Attribute

The study emphasizes that humans are created in the image of God, specifically regarding the "immaterial" or spiritual self. This image includes a deep-seated desire to love and be loved. However, the source of this love is not human effort but the nature of God Himself.

God as the Standard

In the same way that the Bible describes God as "light" and "life," it declares that "God is love." This means that love is part of His essence. Several implications arise from this truth:

- **Providence:** God fills the world with beauty and wonder as evidence of His love.
- **Redemption:** If God only followed the moral law of justice, humanity would be left to the consequences of sin. Because God is love, He seeks to save and provide a remedy for sin.
- **Defining Love:** Humans are cautioned against telling God what He should be like. Instead, God defines love through His kindness, generosity, and redemptive grace.

Universal Love and Common Grace

The document distinguishes between the general love God has for the world and the specific love He has for believers.

- **Common Grace:** This is the unconditional, unlimited love God shows to the entire world. It is seen in the sun shining and the rain falling on both the "just and the unjust."
 - **Compassion:** God demonstrates pity and tenderheartedness by withholding immediate judgment for sin, giving people time to receive the Gospel.
 - **Limits of Universal Love:** While God offers the Gospel to everyone and warns sinners out of compassion, this universal love is temporal and does not transcend this life for those who reject Him.
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The Manifestation of Love: The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

The most significant evidence of God's love is the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The study highlights 1 John 4:9-10 as foundational:

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The Doctrine of Propitiation

The term "propitiation" [^1] is central to understanding Christ's work. It refers to the satisfaction of God's holy wrath and the fulfillment of His just requirements regarding sin.

- **The Mercy Seat:** In the Old Testament, the high priest sprinkled blood on the "mercy seat" to appease God's justice. Jesus serves as the final, complete propitiation.
- **Sacrificial Model:** Christ's love is the model for believers. It is characterized by selflessness and sacrifice rather than self-satisfaction. As stated in 1 John 3:16: *"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."*

The Sovereignty of God in Salvation

The study touches on the tension between divine election (Calvinism) and human free will (Arminianism). It concludes that salvation is ultimately "all about God." While humans must believe, the capacity for that belief is granted by God. The process of being "chosen" is described as God pursuing individuals throughout their lives, even up to their final breath.

The Testimony of Love: Revealing the Unseen God

A third reason believers must love one another is that love serves as their public testimony. Because "no one has seen God at any time," the world can only see Him through the lives of His followers.

The Power of the Witness

- **Visible Evidence:** When believers love one another, God's presence becomes visible to the "watching unbelieving world."
 - **The Command to Love:** Loving others is not a request but a command. It is the primary way disciples are identified. Jesus taught in John 13:35: *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*
 - **Perfect Love:** When believers walk in love, God's love is "perfected" or brought to its intended goal in them. This love is the standard by which a person can take inventory of their own faith.
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Biblical References and Core Teachings

The following scriptures from the NKJV provide the basis for the themes discussed:

- **Ecclesiastes 3:11:** *"He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end."*
 - **1 John 4:7-8:** *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."*
 - **Ephesians 2:4-5:** *"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."*
 - **Isaiah 53:5-6:** *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*
 - **Ephesians 5:1-2:** *"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."*
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Community and Administrative Context

The transcript includes various administrative announcements and prayer concerns for the local fellowship, which illustrate the practical application of community love:

- **Mission and Church Focus:** Support for the We Care Pregnancy Center and baptism assistants.
- **Benevolence:** Collection of clothing, toiletries, and items for "shoe boxes" to assist children with OCC.
- **Prayer Requests:** The community is asked to pray for several individuals facing medical issues and grief, including Bonnie (loss of her daughter), Jasmine (loss of multiple family members), and Donna (hospitalized for blood pressure).

Glossary of Terms

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Brief Definition
<i>Hilasmos</i> [¹]	hee-las-MOS	An appeasement or satisfaction; specifically, Christ's sacrifice that satisfies God's justice.
<i>Monogenes</i> [²]	mon-oh-gen-AYS	Unique, one-of-a-kind, or "only begotten." Used to describe the unique relationship of Jesus to the Father.
<i>Teleioo</i> [³]	tel-ei-OH-o	To complete, finish, or bring to perfection. Used to describe God's love reaching its goal in believers.

[¹]: Referred to in the context of "propitiation" in 1 John 4:10 and Romans 3:24-28. [²]: Referenced in 1 John 4:9 regarding the "only begotten Son." [³]: Related to the Greek word *telos*; used in the discussion of "perfected" love and Christ loving His own "to the end" in John 13:1.