

John 3:16 (NLT) - 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.

1 John 4:7-18 (NLT) - Loving One Another

7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. 8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. 10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. 12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

13 And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. 14 Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. 16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. 17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

18 Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

agápē – properly, *love* which centers in moral *preference*. So too in secular ancient Greek, *agape* focuses on *preference*; likewise, the verb form *agapáō* in antiquity meant "to *prefer*". In the NT, *agape* typically refers to *divine love* (= what *God prefers*).

Generosity is a manifestation of authority.

Luke 10:25-37 (NLT) - ²⁵ One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"

²⁷ The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"^[a]

²⁸ "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

²⁹ The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Parable of the Good Samaritan

³⁰ Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

³¹ "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. ³² A Temple assistant^[b] walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

³³ "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. ³⁴ Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins,^[c] telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

³⁶ "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

³⁷ The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

Study Guide

This last week we spoke about how we are called to live generously and that generosity is a manifestation of authority. As you think about what it means to love generously, to love without expectation or even permission, what comes to mind? Have you every received that type of generosity? The type that comes without stipulation or condition but simply by the choice of the one who gave? What was that like? Have you ever had the opportunity to do that for others? What was that like?

Generosity can be hard to engage in because so much of it seems to be controlled by how much someone is willing to receive, or by seemingly reasonable expectations that there would be some change, some return on the act of generosity. Take a moment to read John 15:1-17.

As you read that what stands out? How does this inform how we love generously? How does knowing that we must draw on Jesus' love and life as our source impact how we view generosity? How does knowing that God loved us first shape how we view others?

When we feel like we have to sum up generosity from within ourselves, a sense of scarcity can seep in. If I give out of the little I sometimes feel I have, then I need to be careful. However, if I remind myself that I am giving only out of what has been generously given to me, then all of a sudden I can be much freer with what I have.

Take some time to pray that we might embody the generosity that God is calling us to, that we might be even greater conduits of His love.