



JANUARY 16

Anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 JOHN 4:8

GOD IS LOVING.

Perhaps you're thinking to yourself, *Thanks for that pearl of wisdom, Captain Obvious. Of course God is loving! Doesn't everyone know that?*

Well, no, they don't. For many people, their life experiences cause them to question God's goodness and love.

That doesn't change the fact that God is loving. The Bible testifies to this from beginning to end, perhaps most famously in John 3:16.

But it's not enough to only say, "God is loving." That's an inadequate description of God. Does this surprise you? It shouldn't. After all, humans can be loving too. Yet in our sin, we screw up love all the time. It's embarrassing, really, when you think about it.

As we discuss God's attributes, we need to truly understand who he is and how love relates to God.

What's It Mean?

Just like all of God's other attributes, his love is defined by his holiness. God's love is a holy love. As you might recall, the term holy means "morally pure and blameless," but even more, it also means "set apart." There is nothing in all creation like God's love.

That's why the apostle John uses unique language to describe God's love. In today's verse, rather than saying, "God is loving" (which is true), John writes something much more powerful: "God is *love*" (emphasis added). There's a difference. In other words, John is saying love finds its origin in God. He gives love its definition. Without God, love wouldn't exist.

That sentence bears repeating: without God, love wouldn't exist. It's what John meant a few verses later when he wrote, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19, esv). Humanity wouldn't have known how to love at all—whether horizontally (others on earth) or vertically (God in heaven)—if God had not gloriously modeled love for us.

How did he do this? The ways are too numerous to count, but for starters, he created us in his image, and when we sinfully rebelled against him, he provided his Son, Jesus Christ, as a wrath-bearing sacrifice in our place.

That's amazing, holy love.

Now What?

The apostle Paul beautifully expounds upon the eternal effects of God's love for his children in Romans 8:31-39. Check it out!

Did You Know?

This concept was so important to John that he repeated it in the same chapter: "God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them" (1 John 4:16).

