

Introduction

This week in **1956**, five missionaries flew to a remote region of Ecuador. They had been attempting to contact a remote people-group, known as the **Waodani** (also Huaorani). The Waodani people were known by the local government for being quite violent. They fought among their various tribes, so few men ever lived long enough to see grandchildren.

The Waodani lived deep in the jungle, so it was difficult to contact them. The group's pilot, Nate Saint, came up with a plan where he would fly in a tight circle above a village and lower a bucket from a rope to give gifts to the Waodani. Eventually, they discovered an area alone the **Curaray River** where they Nate Saint thought he could safely land the plane.

January 8, 1956, they flew into the jungle and made their first face-to-face missionary contact with the Waodani. That day the Waodani speared all five men to death. **Their first contact was their last contact.**

The missionaries carried **guns** to protect themselves in the jungle, but agreed they would not use them to defend against the Waodani. The missionaries reasoned that they were prepared to die, but the Waodani were not because they did not know Christ. In a letter to their supporters, **Nate Saint wrote**, "**We must not let them die without knowing the way to eternal life.**"

Shaped by love

Love shapes how we live. *Why would these five men risk their lives to take the gospel to people they had never met?* Think about the implications of this decision. **They did not love the Waodani because they knew the Waodani. They loved the Waodani because they knew God.**

An amazing thing happens when a person comes to faith in Jesus. When I believe in Jesus, God brings me into an eternal covenant relationship with Him. I know God and I know God's love. Because I know God and know God's love, my life is changed.

Today, as we read [1 John 4:16-21](#), ask yourself, **How does God's love for me shape my life?** Our actions as Christians do not come from self-discipline; they come from new birth. That is, our obedience is a fruit of the Spirit, not a work of the flesh ([Gal 5:19-23](#)). The big idea of [1 John 4:16-21](#) is that **Because God loves you, you can trust God's salvation and love one another.**

[1 John 4:16-21](#) "16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

God is love

How do we know God's love? [1 John 4:16](#) “16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” **We know God's love by knowing God.** That is, we know God's love through our relationship with Him.

God's nature

What does it mean that “God is love?” This describes God's nature. God is unchanging and eternal; thus, **His attributes are unchanging and eternal.** God is not sometimes loving, sometimes wrathful, sometimes just, or sometimes merciful. **God is perfectly and eternally loving.** God's loving acts flow from God's nature.

There is such a misconception in Christianity today that because God is loving, He is not wrathful. **God's attributes do not contradict or struggle against each other.** We cannot say that God is not just because He is merciful. God is both just and merciful. We cannot say that God is not gracious because God is holy. He is both gracious and holy. We cannot say that God is not loving because God is wrathful. God is both loving and wrathful. God's attributes complement each other. **Thus, all of God's actions, including His wrathful and just judgment against sin, is loving.**

The basis of our faith is God's nature. We believe God's word because God is true and infallible. We believe God's promises because God is faithful. **Our faith in God's word and God's promises are rooted in our faith in God's nature.** Likewise, we believe God's love for us because God is love. [1 John 4:16](#) “16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love...”

Abiding in God

Notice in verse 16 that **abiding in God and abiding in God's love are inseparable.** [1 John 4:16](#) “... whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” We do not know God's love second-hand. We know God's love through our relationship with God.

Jesus equated obedience with abiding in God's love. [John 15:9-10](#) “9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments,

you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." We cannot separate obeying God and loving God. Those who know God love Him and obey him.

Verse 16 also says that God abides in us. Scripture teaches that our relationship with God is not bound by location. That is, we do not worship God or interact with God in a temple or church building. Jesus told a Samaritan woman that "true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" ([John 4:23](#)). **God dwells with His people** ([1 Cor 3:16](#)) **and with His church** ([2 Cor 6:16](#)).

Response

How do we know God's love? Knowing God's love is more than reading about His love or hearing about His love. You must have a relationship with God. **We know God's love by knowing God.** God is love and He has shown His love to you through Christ. You can know God's love through faith in Jesus.

No fear in love

How should God's love for you shape your relationship with Him? [1 John 4:17-18](#) "17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." **Because God loves you, you can trust God's salvation.** That is, God's love for His people is the basis of our assurance of salvation from sin and judgment.

Confidence in judgment

How does God's love give us confidence in judgment? [1 John 4:17](#) "17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment..." The phrase, "by this," connects verses 17-18 with verse 16. God's nature (God is love) is the basis for our confidence in the day of judgment. If my confidence rests in my faithfulness, I should fear my upcoming judgment. But, in Christ, my confidence rests in God's nature. **I have confidence in the day of judgment because God's nature is love.**

Love casts out fear

Why does verse 18 contrast fear and love? [1 John 4:18](#) "18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." This verse describes two situations. First, **some people rightly fear God.** Those who do not know God's love (who do not know God) face eternal punishment. Jesus said in [Matthew 25:46](#) "46 And these will go away into

eternal punishment..." Salvation is not universal; those who do not devote themselves to Christ in faith remain in condemnation. [John 3:18](#) "18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." **Those who do not know God should fear His judgment.**

Second, **some people should not fear God.** For those who know God through faith in Jesus, God's love casts out fear ([1 John 4:18](#)). The reason I do not need to fear God's judgment is because God's wrath and judgment has been carried out against Christ in my place. [Galatians 3:13](#) "13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us..."

False Teaching: Some people falsely claim that a person can enter into a relationship with God, then fail to remain in that relationship with God; that is, a person can **lose his salvation** through unfaithfulness. For example, **N. T. Wright** states that we are justified now by faith alone, but justified in final judgment by works. These views are a misunderstanding of salvation. Salvation is a change of relationship with God, but it is so much more than that. **Salvation is a new birth. We are new creations, saved by God's grace and securely held by God's grace.**

If I face God's judgment by my own merit, I will be eternally condemned. If I am judged by my own merit, I should fear God's wrath. By His death, Jesus atoned for the sins of those who have faith in Him. That is, He bore God's wrath in my place. If I am in Christ, when I face God's judgment, I will be judged by Christ's merit, not my own. **My confidence in judgment is in Christ, not myself.**

[Response](#)

Jim Elliot wrote in his journal, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." This is based on Jesus' words in [Matthew 16:26](#) "26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" Jim Elliot also wrote, "I do not wonder that the men who preach the gospel fear death less than the men who hear it." **Those who know God have no reason to fear death because we have no reason to fear eternity - because we know God and God is love.**

Your confidence on the day of judgment should be **based solely on your relationship with Jesus.** If you do not know God, you would do well to dread the day of judgment and repent. If you know God, do not linger on your sin. Live in daily repentance and fully trust in Christ's atonement without fear ([1 John 2:1-2](#)). Let your confidence in judgment be founded on God's love, not your own merit. **Because God loves you, you can trust God's salvation.**

Love one another

How should God's love shape your relationships with others? [1 John 4:19–21](#) “19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” **Because God loves you, you can love one another.** That is, God's love in you, through your relationship with Him in Christ, shapes your love for others.

God loved first

How can you love others? Furthermore, how can you love those who are hard to love? [1 John 4:19](#) “19 We love because he first loved us.” Verses 20-21 describe our love for other believers. Verse 19 explains that our love for other believers flows from God's love for us - “because He first loved us.”

God's love for me is unconditional. God loves those who have no interest in Him and those who hate Him. [Romans 5:8](#) “8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God's love for me shapes my love for others. Just as God loves me unconditionally, I should love **believers** (brothers) unconditionally. If someone in the church causes me strife, **I am not better off if they leave; I am better off if we reconcile.** Likewise, because of God's love for me, I should love **unbelievers** unconditionally. It is not loving to serve our community on the condition that they respond to the gospel. If no one in Greenbrier comes to faith, we should still show them love. **Love that is conditional is not love, it is manipulation.**

God's love precedes my love; that is, before I loved God, He loved me. [1 John 4:10](#) “10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the [atonement] for our sins.” Likewise, **my love for others should precede their love for me.** If a fellow believer hates me, I should continue to love him. Jesus said in [Matthew 5:46–47](#) “46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” As children of God, we should love one another unconditionally. **Our love for one another reflects God's love to us.**

Loving your brother

Why is it important that Christians love one another? [1 John 4:20–21](#) “20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment

we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” **Our love for one another reflects our love for God.**

Verse 20 makes a bold claim to which we must pay attention. **Anyone who claims to love God, but does not love other believers, is lying** (perhaps to himself). For example, if someone chooses to **separates himself from the church**, he does not love God. This is the exact situation we read about in 1 John ([1 John 2:19](#)). Likewise, if anyone within the church **maintains bitterness**, he does not love God.

Claiming to believe in God without believing in Jesus is not real faith. There were false teachers who had recently left the church ([1 John 2:19](#)). This letter argues that genuine faith believes the truth about Jesus. **Likewise, claiming to love God without loving other believers is not real love.** Those who had left the church proved the falsity of their beliefs by their lack of love. Genuine faith produces love for others. Truth and love are inseparable aspects of faith.

Response

We must be careful that we **do not attempt to obey verses 20-21 apart from verse 19.** This passage calls out wrong behavior - it is hypocrisy to say you love God without loving a brother. Our response should be to actively love other believers (fellowship, prayer, humility). Our love for other believers does not flow from self-discipline. As verse 19 points out, my love for others flows from God’s love for me. **Because God loves you, you can love one another.** Abide in God’s love.

Conclusion

In 2001, **Steven Curtis Chapman** released a song called “**No Greater Love**,” honoring the sacrifice of the five missionaries who were killed by the Waodani. The point of the song is that there is no greater love than “to be willing to die so another might live,” referring to the missionaries’ dying willingly to take the gospel to the Waodani.

The song concludes with a Waodani named **Mincaye** singing in the Waodani language about His faith in God. Mincaye was one of the men who killed the missionaries. *How did Mincaye come to faith in Jesus?* Two years after the missionaries’ deaths (1958), **Jim Elliot’s wife, Nate Saint’s sister**, and others moved into the Waodani territory and continued the goal of sharing the gospel with the Waodani. Mincaye said this made them realize “**their words were true, because their love was true.**”

How does God’s love shape your life? Because of God’s love in them, these five missionaries died for the opportunity to share the gospel with the Waodani so they too could know God. They did not fear death; they only feared someone else dying without knowing God. Because of God’s love in them, the missionaries’ families moved in with

the Waodani. They did not fear death; they only feared someone else dying without knowing God.

How does God's love shape your life? Those who know God through faith in Jesus know God's love, because God is love. Because of God's love, you can live and die without fear, knowing that you will be judged by Christ's perfection, not your own, and knowing that you have eternal life in Christ. Because of God's love, you can love others unconditionally. You can love fellow-believers. You can love your enemies. You can love those whom you have never met. **Because God loves you, you can trust God's salvation and love one another.** [1 John 4:19](#) "19 We love because he first loved us."