

Series: "LOVE LETTER from JOHN"

For Message: 1 John 4:7-16

Message Title: "Getting to the Bottom of Love"

Introduction: Welcome to BMZ CHURCH! HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!

Looking BACK over 2023, FOR SOME of us, we MIGHT have EXPERIENCED some things in 2023 that cause us to SAY ... GOOD RIDANCE! Others, MAYBE you had some EXPERIENCES where you will REMEMBER 2023 FONDLY. MY GUESS is MOST of us had BOTH.

In the CHURCH, SAME THING: BOTH. There were some THINGS in 2023 WE'D LIKE to FORGET and OTHERS we will REMEMBER FONDLY ... as GOD MOMENTS ... those TIMES we KNEW GOD SHOWED UP without DENIAL. We've CERTAINLY been through a LOT with DISAFFILIATION from ONE DENOMINATION and AFFILIATING with The GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH.

AND there are SAMES and CHANGES on the HORIZON! Let's START with the CHANGES. As PART of the GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH, we will have MORE OPPORTUNITIES for OUTREACH in the NAME of JESUS. We will have OPPORTUNITIES to REACH into some NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES with Preaching and Teaching of TRUTH from SCRIPTURE. We will EXPAND our MISSION OPPORTUNITIES as TIME goes BY. We will have GREAT OPPORTUNITIES to MEET with and PARTNER in MINISTRY with OTHER CHURCHES of LIKE MIND ... Scriptural Holiness.

I believe the LANDSCAPE of MINISTRY has POTENTIAL to CHANGE over the next FEW YEARS ... we MIGHT NEED to DO some things DIFFERENTLY to CARRY OUT The GREAT COMMISSION. We'll see...

But SOME things on the HORIZON will REMAIN the SAME. Our CHURCHES will HOLD FAST to SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS ... that God's Word is GOD'S WORD and it's UP to US to CONFORM to HIM and HIS WAYS as OPPOSED to the OTHER WAY AROUND. We will CONTINUE to REACH OUT to the LEAST and the LOST LOCALLY and AROUND the WORLD. We will EACH continue to STRIVE to ... Let's KEEP this SIMPLE ... **"NOT GET DISTRACTED but GROW in our FAITH so we can SHARE it with OTHERS."** I keep finding that in Scripture ... especially in the Words of JESUS and in the Early Church.

More DETAILS coming about NAME CHANGE, Membership, etc.

Okay, HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE! For TODAY ... I wanted to REACH BACK into the SUMMER of 2023 and REMIND us of what we were LEARNING from JOHN The APOSTLE in his FIRST LETTER ... Remember: **"LOVE LETTER from JOHN"?! It was a Bible Study to help us continue to GROW in our FAITH, so we are ENCOURAGED to SHARE it with OTHERS. When we are FOCUSED on God's WORD, we are LESS DISTRACTED by the THINK/GS of THIS WORLD.**

John wants us to experience REAL LIFE, according to JESUS ... WHAT we are CREATED to EXPERIENCE! FELLOWSHIP with OTHERS, GOD, and JESUS. JOY may be FULL and OVERFLOWING. Meaningful and DEEP PURPOSE.

It has been said the FIRST LETTER from JOHN is like a SPIRAL STAIRCASE because it continually RETURNS to THREE TOPICS: LOVE, OBEDIENCE, and TRUTH. BUT here's the THING ... it is NOT just REPETITIOUS. Each time JOHN RETURNS to a TOPIC, he comes to it from a DIFFERENT ANGLE and goes a LITTLE DEEPER.

So, as we WRAP UP 2023, I want us to GO DEEPER in the TOPIC of LOVE ...

If you REMEMBER from CHRISTMAS EVE, we USED 1 JOHN 4:16, 19. In Verse 16, John REMINDS us that GOD IS LOVE. It is the VERY BEING and NATURE of GOD. IF we are UNITED to GOD through CHRIST, we SHARE HIS NATURE. Since His NATURE is LOVE, then LOVE is a VALID TEST of our FELLOWSHIP with GOD and our CHRIST-LIKENESS. It's a TEST of our SPIRITUAL LIFE.

And, AS we ALLOW the NATURE of GOD (Love) to PERMEATE US, become a PART of US, then for us, as BELIEVERS, LOVING OTHERS will start to become NATURAL ... As God's NATURE is IN US, then our RESPONSES to OTHERS will NATURALLY become MORE and MORE LOVING. Here we GO:

### **Three Foundational Facts About God:**

Let's DISCOVER the FIRST FACT as we BEGIN in the FIRST LETTER from JOHN ... 1 JOHN 4:7-8 = *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. 8But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* Let's just WRITE THAT DOWN ...

#### **#1 = God is LOVE**

GOD is LOVE, but LOVE does NOT necessarily mean GOD. It has been SAID, "**LOVE does NOT DEFINE God, but GOD DEFINES LOVE.**" God's LOVE is HOLY. A LOT of things called "**LOVE,**" BEAR NO RELATIONSHIP to the HOLY LOVE of GOD. Think about the THINGS we CLAIM to "**LOVE.**" Then, throw the WORD "**UNCONDITIONAL**" in front or BEHIND that LOVE and SEE if it's TRUE.

CHRIST-LIKE LOVE is SPECIAL. There is FALSE LOVE and there is TRUE (Godly) LOVE. LOVE, therefore, is a VALID TEST of our FAITH in CHRIST. Since GOD IS LOVE, and we CLAIM a PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with HIM, we MUST, by NECESSITY, REVEAL His LOVE in HOW we LIVE. A CHILD of God is BORN of GOD and SHARES GOD'S NATURE. Since, "*God IS LOVE,*" Christ-FOLLOWERS OUGHT to LOVE EACH OTHER ... and OTHERS. It's LOGICAL!

Then, in VERSE 8 ... NO LOVE = NO GOD. This is the TEST. Jesus TAUGHT we'd KNOW people's HEARTS by their FRUIT. First FRUIT = LOVE. If I do NOT **KNOW GOD** (NOT just KNOWLEDGE of Him) ... To KNOW GOD = I have a DEEP RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM ... I've EXPERIENCED His LOVE in MY LIFE, PERSONALLY... If I do NOT REVEAL His LOVE to the PEOPLE AROUND ME, then I do NOT KNOW GOD.

How's THAT for CLEAR? "**But ANYONE who does NOT LOVE does NOT KNOW GOD...**" You CAN'T! And you CANNOT MANUFACTURE said LOVE on your OWN. You CAN'T just TRY HARDER to be LOVING to OTHERS. It comes SOLELY FROM GOD through HIS SPIRIT. God IS LOVE! To ARGUE against THIS is to PROVE that ONE does NOT REALLY KNOW GOD.

Let's keep going ... 1 JOHN 4:9-11 = *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. 10This 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. 11Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.* #2 ... God, WHO IS LOVE ...

#### **#2 = God SENT His SON**

Listen, TRUE LOVE is ACTIVE. LOVE is SHOWN, NOT just TALKED about. God took ACTION! *God LOVES us SO MUCH He SENT His ONE and ONLY SON. "...WHILE we were STILL SINNERS, Christ DIED for US.*" (Romans 5:8) LOVE in ACTION!

Keep in MIND that THIS is GODLY LOVE / DIFFERENT. God DID NOT Send His SON to DIE on a CROSS because of OUR LOVE for GOD. NOPE! The WORLD'S ATTITUDE toward GOD is ANYTHING BUT LOVE! God SENT His SON to DIE for US because of GODLY LOVE ... UNCONDITIONAL, with GRACE and MERCY.

GOD LOVES us ENOUGH to DO SOMETHING about IT! By the POWER of the CROSS, Our HOLY GOD made a WAY / a BRIDGE between HIS HOLINESS and OUR SINFULNESS to be IN RELATIONSHIP with US ... out of HIS LOVE!

Then, DID you NOTICE that JOHN wrote for a SECOND TIME for US to "LOVE EACH OTHER"? This is a COMMAND for THOSE who FOLLOW JESUS. ***"SINCE GOD LOVED us THAT MUCH (sent Son), we SURELY OUGHT to LOVE EACH OTHER."***

Now, it is IMPORTANT for us to GROW in our FAITH and SHARE it with OTHERS, right? Right. It's IMPORTANT for us to PROGRESS in our UNDERSTANDING of LOVE. To LOVE out of DUTY is GOOD, but to LOVE out of APPRECIATION for what LOVE we've RECEIVED is EVEN BETTER! In 2024, let's PAY MORE ATTENTION to what GOD has DONE for US ... His LOVE ... and, OUT of our APPRECIATION, we DO as He ASKS ... LOVE OTHERS! God is LOVE. He SENT His SON.

Let's set this up ... ***1 JOHN 4:12-13 = 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. 13And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.***  
**#3 = God LIVES In US**

This is WHO GOD IS: He LOVES US. He SENT His SON so we can BE in RELATIONSHIP for ALL ETERNITY. And, in the MEANTIME, He LIVES IN US. He does NOT just GIVE us ORDERS to DO THINGS that do NOT come NATURAL to us WITHOUT HIM. He GOES WITH us ... IN US! THAT is HIS DESIRE: To LIVE IN US!

Listen, GOD REVEALED HIMSELF in the PERSON of JESUS CHRIST back in the FIRST CENTURY. HOW? The SPIRIT of GOD was IN JESUS / GOD in the FLESH. They are ONE. GOD wants the SAME with US. For US to be ONE with HIM and EACH OTHER. In the FIRST CENTURY, God REVEALED Himself in JESUS. Ever SINCE, God's DESIRE is to REVEAL HIMSELF to the WORLD through US ... His FOLLOWERS.

John REPEATS ... ***1 JOHN 4:14-15 = Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.***

Do you DECLARE ... NOT with your LIPS ONLY, but with YOUR WHOLE HEART ... that JESUS is the SON of GOD? Do you PLACE your WHOLE ETERNITY in the FAITH that JESUS IS WHO HE SAID HE WAS? Do YOU TRUST His WORD and HIS WAYS? Do you TRUST that GOD'S LOVE is UNCONDITIONAL? GOOD! Then you have GOD LIVING in YOU through HIS SPIRIT! ***1 JOHN 4:16 = 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.***

IF GOD lives in YOU, then HIS NATURE is IN YOU. His NATURE is LOVE ... His LOVE, NOT OURS. As we WRAP up 2023 and HEAD into 2024, will you ALLOW HIM to keep GROWING you in your FAITH and in your LOVE? Let's PRAY!

Next Steps: *I will Memorize 1 John 4:9*

*I will Read 1 John 4-5*

*I will Practice Love this week by paying attention to the needs of others.*

## Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us!  
In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information.

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

### **IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today**

- We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.

It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is HIT "**SEND**" your COMPLETED Connection Card

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- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... 1 JOHN 3:24 = *Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.*
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- NEXT WEEK: **NEW in 2024 ... Let's GO DEEPER into our FAITH ALL DAY, EVERY DAY!**

*"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."*

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