

# The Perfect Image of Perfect Love

Easter 2026 – The Way of Love (CGS #2) – John 3:13-21

**INTRODUCTION** – We’re taking another short detour from 1 Corinthians this week, but it’s for a really important reason. After looking closely at chapter 13, and as we approach Easter, it’s good for our hearts to look at Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross through the lens of love. There are a million different things Jesus accomplished in his journey to the cross, his death in our place, and his resurrection, but when we look at his motivation, there’s really only one word that rises to the surface: Love.

Let’s take a moment to trace love through the Bible. Before the beginning of time, the Triune God determined that the Son would come to earth to save sinners (Matt 25:34; John 17:24; Eph 1:3-5; 1 Pet 1:18-20). Why? John 3:16 tells us, “For God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” In Deuteronomy 6, the famous chapter of God’s upward call for Israel, he commanded them, “You shall *love* the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5). From this we learn that love is not a feeling, but a command we can choose to follow, or ignore. In the Gospels, Jesus spends a lot of time instructing his followers to love (Matt 5:43-48; 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-33; Luke 6:27-35; 10:27; 11:42-43; John 13:34-35; 15:9-17, among others). This doesn’t just mean “be nice to each other,” but literally “lay down your lives for each other” (John 15:13). And in fact we see the most perfect example of love in Jesus’ willingness to lay down his life for his friends (Romans 5:1-11). In the Epistles, almost every letter contains some instruction for love, but it’s not just “because I said so.” The New Testament authors root our love for each other in God’s love for us (Gal 2:20; Eph 1:3-6; 1 John 3:1-23, among others). In looking at these passages, we’re starting to understand the twofold nature of God’s love: From God to us, and from us to others. God loves us—which we see perfectly modeled in Jesus—and now that love motivates us to love one another.

But where does all this love come from? What’s its origin? 1 John 4 makes it clear: from God himself. He is the spring and fountain of love. He defines love. All of our human love is just a faltering reflection of his infinite, perfect love. Any experience of true, biblical, self-giving love is—to varying degrees—an experience of God. There is no love apart from him. Our enemy can’t create love, all he can do is corrupt and defile it. Even the muddy water in a country creek was once pure, clean drinking water. To get to it, all we have to do is follow the stream up to its source, to God, and drink deeply.

And this is why we look to Jesus. **Jesus is the perfect image of perfect love.** He embodies everything we learned last week from 1 Corinthians 13. He lives out everything 1 John tells us to do. He is that pure spring from which all streams of love flow. And how did we respond? “People loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (John 3:19). We ran and hid! Just like Adam and Eve in the Garden, when we saw the true light, we clung to the darkness. Even today, knowing everything the Bible says about God’s purifying love for us, experiencing the joy of true love and the agony of false love, we don’t like being exposed. We don’t like it when God says, “I love you too much to leave you where you are.” In love, God calls us to step into the light, take off our comfortable blindfolds, and let his loving light cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). God loved, so God gave. He gave us his Son. There is nothing more loving than that.

**GETTING STARTED** – As a group, take time to answer this question: Has a child ever tried to conceal their disobedience from you? How did that go?

**IN THE WORD** – Let's dig back into the passage. It's important to strengthen our muscles in reading God's Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God's Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage aloud to the group. Then, follow the simple method below (O.P.A.).

**Observe:** Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

**Principles:** From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

**Apply:** Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God's Word. Remember, we believe that God's Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live Monday-Friday. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

**DISCUSS** – Another way to approach your time together is to talk through the following discussion questions:

1. What did you hear God's Spirit say to you through the passage this week? How does it encourage you? How does it sharpen you?
2. How have you seen God at work in your life this week? Have you enjoyed him? Have you heard his voice and the leading of his Spirit? Big ways or small ways.
3. Have you ever tried to keep a really big secret from someone? How did it feel?
  - a. How does it feel to conceal sin from God and others?
4. How does Jesus' work on the cross demonstrate God's love for us?
5. How does God's love for us motivate us to love others?
6. What are some other passages about love that come to mind?
  - a. What do they teach us about God's love?
7. Why does it hurt so badly to have our sin exposed?