**How Do I Love God? 1John 4:7 – 5:5**

**Introduction:** Linda Fink story/question: “How do I love God?”

It’s fair question, especially when we *assume* that love is an emotion over which we have, or can exercise, little control. This just isn’t so, despite the fact that everyone today seems to think, believe, and *feel* otherwise. “I can’t help the way I feel!” is the common refrain. And so, believing such to be impossible, we expend little if any effort to control our emotions… including love- and thus, we start to *think* and *feel* about “love” the way *the world does*, cf. 1John 4:5. Then, we conclude that we simply either *love* or we *don’t,* but that there’s nothing that we can really do about it one way or another.And if we don’t *feel* love- for God or anyone else, we don’t really know how to even begin to do so, even if such should become our desire or intention.

**Preliminaries: Let’s begin at the foundation…**

But the premise of such thinking is just wrong, and we know this if we really think about it… especially if we understand anything about what the Bible says. For instance:

* Why do we stress the importance of “controlling your temper,” for example, if we have no real jurisdiction over our emotions? Isn’t “anger” an *emotion?*
* Additionally, and more importantly, consider all the *emotions* the Bible commands us to *control* or *manage:*

*Sensuality* (unbridled *lust*), *enmity, jealousy, outbursts of anger,* and *envy* are all emotionally-based *“works of the flesh”* which we’re told to *control* or *eliminate* them, Gal.5:19-21; and conversely,

*Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,* and *goodness* either are or start as internal emotions, even if they have external manifestations, and all certainly fall under the category of feelings over which we are to exercise *self-control,* Gal.5:22.

How else could we fulfill the command to *“Be angry, and yet do not sin”* or eliminate *bitterness, wrath,* and *anger* and yet be *tender-hearted* if we are not responsible for “how we feel,” Eph.26,31-32?

* So, the truth is that **we are responsible for “how we feel”-** both by *controlling* or *eliminating* negative emotions (which are contradictory to God’s word) and by *generating* the positive ones (which are commanded by God’s word).
* What all of this means relative to our subject matter is that if we *don’t love God,* we **must learn to do so**. This is not just a matter of “I just don’t *feel* it, and can’t help it”! So...

**How do we *learn* to love God, even if, and perhaps especially if, “I don’t feel it”?**

1. **Recognize and acknowledge *His love for you;* simply that God loves *you,* 1John 4:19.**

Think for a moment about how often “love” *blooms* and *blossoms* where we never expected it because we discover how someone else “feels” about us! Perhaps such is only natural to some degree, but simply knowing that someone “likes” or even thinks we’re “cute” or “funny” or “interesting” or even just “worth pursuing” instantly begins to change how we feel about them, cp. Matt.5:46.

This tendency is increased exponentially when when/if they do something nice or special for us; how much so when the act or deed is extraordinary, 1John 4:10.

1. **Comprehend the *constancy* of His love for you; that He has *always* loved you, 1John 4:7-8.**

He has always *loved* you. He has always been *faithful* and *true* to you. He loves no one *more than* you (and of course, no one *less than* you either). He has loved you your *whole life,* cf. Jer.1:5a and Psalm139:13-16.

1. **Realize the *extent* of His love for you; *the multiplicity of ways* God loves you, 1John 4:12-13,16-18.**  Even the *rains from heaven, fruitful seasons* and the *wonders, beauties,* and *joys* of life are all “manifestations” of His love for us, cf. Acts 14:16-17. *Families* to love and to love us, *friends* to enjoy, and *brethren* to care for and be cared for by are all from God because He loves us and wants the best for us. Even, perhaps better “especially,” He gave us *His Word* to guide us through life, cf. v.6 and Psalm 119:105. He loved us (even before *creation*) enough to *impart* His Spirit (both in/through *how* He created us, Gen.1:26-27; and, through allowing It to *dwell in* us). All of these- and many more, are the *provisions* of a *loving Father* for His *children,* Jas.1:17.
2. **Understand the *depth* of His love for you; *how much* God loves you, 1John 4:9-10.** Of course, the great demonstration of the *depth* of God’s love for us was the sacrifice of His beloved Son, Jesus the Christ, for us and in our stead. Not only that He was willing to do so, but that His love for us was so great *even while/if* we didn’t love Him, cf. v.10a and Rom.5:6-10.

**When we know and understand that: 1) God *loves us;* 2) that He has *always loved us;* 3) *all the ways* He loves us; and, 4) *how much* He loves us, how could we not love Him?**

**Conclusion: How should these things *affect* us? What are the *results* of “loving God”? How we can *know* that we “love God”:**

1. **Become *children* born again of His love, 1John 5:1**
2. **Loving *each other,* 1John 5:2a**
3. ***Keeping* His commandments, 1John 5:2b-3**
4. ***Overcoming faith,* 1John 5:4-5**

**Now, a few closing questions for us to consider both now and later.**

* **Do you *love God?***
* **Will you *always* love God?**
* **Will you love Him *with everything* you have?**
* **Will you love Him *more than your family* or *your life?***