

May 30, 2021

13. God Is Love — 1 John 4:7-21

God is love,
and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them (v. 16).

Abide. Other translations say “dwell,” “remain,” “live.” This image for relating to God has always been particularly meaningful to me. When I was a teen, I got my first flip-phone that had customizable features. I wrote “Remain in me” (John 15:4 NIV) as the greeting on the home screen. How delighted I was to discover recently that the Greek word is *meno!* It seems hilariously serendipitous to me, having recently joined the Mennonite church, that this longtime framework for my faith, abiding, is built right into the name of my new denomination. I’m not a cultural Mennonite, but I’ve been trying to *meno*, to abide, for almost as long as I can remember.

I love the book of 1 John. I love its emphasis on the simple but profound foundations of our faith—“God is love” (4:16). We see God’s love in the sending of God’s Son and in the Son’s sacrificial death (4:9). “Since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another” (4:11). When we abide in God’s love and extend love to one another, we reveal God to the world (4:12, 17).

The world needs the love of God more than ever, and the church has been tasked with introducing the world to God through the love in which we abide. What does it look like to love one another?

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another (4:10-11).

The implication is that we are to love the way Jesus did, which was sacrificial and concerned with the needs of others.

This is going to be important in the coming weeks and months as churches navigate the next phase of the pandemic. A variety of perspectives and preferences are surfacing as we consider reopening, returning to corporate worship, making decisions about vaccinations, masks, and singing. *Love* must be both the beginning and end point. We must be so centered in the reality of God’s love for us, that it is our primary means of identification. Not whether we are pro-mask or anti-vax, but that we, and everyone around us, are the beloved of God. When we are so in touch with our belovedness, demonstrated in the sacrificial love of Jesus, we can follow him in relinquishing our claims to what we think we deserve or believe to be true.

As we navigate our way through these days, tensions will arise. As the church, may we truly be *menos*—abiding, dwelling, living in the love of Christ, who first loved us. May that love be perfected in our interactions and decision-making processes that prefer the needs and desires of others. In so doing, may God be glorified and revealed in the world through the church.

—Rachel Wallace

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Rachel Wallace loves Jesus, her husband, James, her two kids, and her dog. She pastors the Eigenheim Mennonite Church in rural Saskatchewan. Her kids would tell you she spends too much time on Facebook. They're right.

Editor's note: We are grateful to Rachel for faithfully pointing us, through Scripture, to ways to live for God during these challenging times as the church and in the world.

Ruben Chupp of Nappanee, Indiana, joins us for this summer's study, *Facing Life's Challenges*. Ruben is a spiritual director, chaplain, and retired pastor who is committed to following Jesus all the way home.

Looking for participant guide page numbers in the leader guide? The page numbers in the leader guide work for both guides.

Resources for this session

- **Hunter Hess** is the presenter for unit 3, God. These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each weekly session.
The videos are free and available on [MennoMedia's YouTube channel](#).

In the Leader guide:

"How to Write an Unforgettable Six-Word Story," Masterclass, May 5, 2021,
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-an-unforgettable-six-word-story#3-examples-of-sixword-stories>.

"Six-Word Stories, Statements, and Exclamations: A Journaling Exercise," What's Your Grief,
<https://whatsyourgrief.com/six-word-stories-statements-and-exclamations-a-journaling-exercise/>