

Learning to be a Community of Love

The Preeminence of Love: Important Scripture Passages? (What would you name?)

Focal question: What are some of the important differences between a) how our culture has formed us to think about love and b) how followers of Jesus have been called to understand and embody God's love?

God's Economy of Love: 1 John 4:7-21

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶ So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so 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 reached perfection in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹ The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Some Questions to Ponder

What does this passage teach you about God's love? What questions does it raise for you about God's love? About the ways we love other people? About the connection between God's love and our love of others?

Some differences between our everyday economies and God’s economy or Kingdom economy

Everyday “Normal” Economy (How we are encouraged to “order our households”)	God’s Economy or Kingdom Economy (How God’s household is ordered)
Most basic activity: Earning	Most basic activity: Receiving
Owning	Stewarding
What we have to work with: Resources	What we have to work with: Gifts
Saving, Investing, Hoarding, Spending; whatever is deemed in my best interest	Giving, What are God’s interests? Interests of others?
Protect, guard (institutions and structures)	Risk/Trust (God also takes risks) Parable of the talents
Point of activity: Secure an uncertain future; driven by fear and anxiety Gospel story; building bigger barns	Point of activity: Live into God’s abundant future (God’s reign of love and <i>Shalom</i>); nurtured by trust; risk
Problem: Never enough	Reality: Abundance (“more than enough”)
Myth/Story of Scarcity; Economics as science of scarcity	Myth/Story of Abundance; abundance = more than enough (Feeding miracles)
Point of life: Secure your own piece of the pie	Point of life: Participate in God’s circulation of gifts
Posture: Grasping	Posture: Open Hand

Economy = oikonomia (household “ordering” or stewardship)