

# Love Deeply

*1 Peter 1:22*

## **I. Scripture reading: 1 Peter 4**

**II. Love Deeply:** Peter has delivered some challenging and necessary commands to the people of Christ: “prepare your minds for action”, “be self-controlled”, “set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed”, “do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance”, “be holy in all you do”, and “live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear”. Now we come to a command that is incredibly simplistic but entirely central to who we are meant to be and what we are meant to do as God’s people: “Love one another deeply from the heart.” Come, let’s be challenged together by this basic but life-changing command...

**III. Peter’s Insistence:** Peter, like his Master and his fellow apostles, was insistent and consistent in his command that the saints of God love. He reminded them that the source of their inexpressible and glorious joy was their love for their unseen Master (1:8). Then, throughout the course of his letter, he commanded them to love one another multiple times (1:22, 2:17, 3:8, 4:8, 5:14). Notice that in 4:8 he prefaced the command with the words, “Above all...”

**IV. Jesus’ Command:** [read John 13:34-35] Our Lord Jesus was not in the least bit vague about his expectations for his followers: love one another. Why? Because he loved us! Also, our genuine and deep love will speak to the world more clearly than words: We are disciples of Jesus!

**V. Love Deeply:** Our task is to love, and this is simple matter. Unfortunately, simplicity is not the same as ease. The beginning and end of our obligation to God and each other is LOVE. This morning, I want to meditate together on the true nature of deep, heartfelt love. Love is **risky**. Love is **unpredictable** and **inconvenient**. Love is **costly**. God is not calling his people to just share a polite and pleasant exchange of words on Sunday mornings. We are not meant to simply share the same space, experience the same songs and messages, or share the same church culture. We are meant to share all of those things because they are a part of life, and we are meant to share our lives with one another. Effective discipleship is terribly difficult, if not impossible, in the absence of deep, genuine and heartfelt love. We must be willing to risk rejection if we are to be accepted. We must risk disappointment if we are to experience satisfaction. God made us to need each other. I was reminded this week by Pastor Erwin McManis that Adam had God in Eden, but God knew he needed someone else. “It is not good for man to be alone.” We’ve always needed community.

## **VI. Conclusion: “Little Children, Love One Another”**

Tradition tells us that the Apostle John, after his time on the island of Patmos (during which he received the Revelation), he spent the rest of his life ministering in Ephesus and the surrounding areas. He would address the saints gathered there in Ephesus, knowing his time to pass away must be coming soon. Do you know the words he chose to share with them? Out of all the vast knowledge, insight and experience that he had as the last remaining apostle of Jesus, guess what he share repeatedly with the disciples of Jesus.

“*Little children, love one another.*” In fact, it is said that just before he died, he went before the church of Ephesus and said these words over and over again. This was his message from the Lord. When asked by a disciple there to explain why he repeated this message to them, he answered, “This is the Lord’s command. If you do this alone, it will be enough.” This isn’t Scripture, but I must say that it agrees with what John wrote in his gospel and his letters. Let us consider again what the Master said: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Beloved, let’s show the world and all the powers of darkness who we are: We are disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.