1 John 4:8 tells us God is love. This does not mean that love is God, but that God is loving by nature. God is the very definition and source of love. To truly know love, we must know God. And to know God is to know love.

**The Nature of God’s Love**

“For God so loved…”

- God’s love is self-generated.
- Love is essential to God.
  - Essential/absolute attributes: Those attributes that are essential to God being God, such as holiness, righteousness, wisdom, etc.
  - Relative absolutes: Those attributes of God that are dependent on His free decision to create the world. Without His relationship with the world, these attributes may not be expressed or known. These attributes are grounded in God’s essential attributes. For example, wrath is a relative attribute, expressed because of sin and injustice, and grounded in God’s essential attributes of holiness, righteousness, and love.
- God’s love is without question an essential attribute. Love originates in Him. Without love, God would not be God.

- Triune Love:
  - John 14:7 – The Father loves the Son from outside of time and creation.
  - John 14:31 – The Son obeys the Father because of love.
  - Father, Son, and Spirit have always existed in perfect love.

- Application:
  - Love is not something we invented and cultivated.
  - Love is an absolute gift from God.
  - Love is an invitation for us to experience something of the perfect inter-relationship of the Triune God.
- God’s love is emotional.
  - Jesus wept, Jesus lamented, because He loved.
  - Ezekiel 16 – God’s love causes Him to lament over His unfaithful bride.
  - Zephaniah 3:14-17 – God’s love rejoices over His redeemed people.

**The Object of God’s Love**

“For God so loved the world…”

- The World
  - God loved the world. Without doubt, God loves all people.
  - Matthew 5:45 – Rain falls on just and unjust alike.
-Romans 5:8 – God even loves His enemies.
-“The world” also indicates what kind of people God loves.
-John uses this word “world” as a technical shorthand for the realm of people in moral rebellion against God.
-1 John 2:15-17
-“In John 3:16 God’s love in sending the Lord Jesus is to be admired not because it is extended to so big a thing as the world, but to so bad a thing; not to so many people, as to such wicked people.” D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, p. 17

**Application:**
-God loves not because the object is loveable. The world is not the recipient of God’s love because it is so worthy. God loves because He loved. God’s love generates within Himself. God loves the world because God is a loving God.
-this is how Christians must love.

**The Demonstration of God’s Love**
“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son…”
-God’s love is active and sacrificial. He sent His only Son, knowing and planning for him to be sacrificed by the very world to which He sent His Son.
-Because God loved the world, He gave His Son.
-Because Jesus loved the world, He obeyed the Father.
-Because the Spirit loved the world, He brings us to the Father through the Son.
-The incarnation and crucifixion is the greatest/truest demonstration of sacrificial love.

**Application:**
-Our love must be active. It cannot be in word only, but in deed.
-To love like God loves is to sacrifice. Love is costly.
-Sacrificial love is the foundational ethic of Christianity; the ethic of the cross.

**The Outcome of God’s Love**
“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”
-God’s love creates a covenant community of believers.
-Isreal, Church.
-God loves this community in a way that He does not love all people.
-God loves all people, but He does not love all people the same way.
-God has a special kind of love for His people.
-Malachi 1:2-3, Deuteronomy 10:14-15, Ephesians 5:25
-Why does God love these people so much?
-Deuteronomy 7:7-8
-The evidence of God’s love in a community.
-1 John 5:3 – Obedience to God. Those who love God obey Him.
-Are you a part of the believing, loving, community of God’s love?