

# The Love of God that Transforms

## Read 1 John 4:1-6

John writes as a person who followed and spent years as a close disciple of Jesus. Read 1 John 1:1-3 to hear the very personal and intimate knowledge John has of Jesus – the Word of Life.

But there were others who did not have such personal or first-hand experience of Jesus, yet were nevertheless teaching mistruths about Jesus – teaching suggesting “another Christ” or “against the Christ”. This is why they are called “Antichrist”, John’s shorthand term for those who propose a different Jesus to that found in the gospels, and the spiritual power that inspires such false teaching.

### Questions for Discussion:

- What is the mistruth that John highlights in 1 John 4:2?
- What are some common mistruths about Jesus that float around in our culture today?
- From what sources of information concerning Jesus do you think most people rely on in forming their opinions about him?

In John 20:30-31, John shares the primary purpose for writing his gospel. The four canonical gospel accounts are the earliest and most reliable information available on the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

- What are some ways you can rediscover Jesus of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)?
- What are some barriers that impede you from engaging Jesus from the gospels?
- What other ways could GWAC or your life group can help you and others to personally encounter Jesus afresh through the gospel accounts?

## Read 1 John 4:6-12

John writes that God is love, and the supreme revelation of God’s love to the world is shown through God’s actions through the Son of God, empowered by the Spirit. As a consequence, those people who have become children of God through the saving work of the Son, are also called to love as their Heavenly Father does, and in the example of their great brother – the Son. Indeed, God’s living in us by the Holy Spirit is the way God’s love continues to be shown to the world (v.12).

### Questions for Discussion:

Pray together for the Holy Spirit’s direction and empowerment to “enflesh” God’s love to others around you, naming specific people who come to mind – from the everyday to occasional connections. Then discuss the following:

- What are some specific actions that display the love of God to others, especially during this pandemic season?
- How can your small group or life group display the love of God together (both inside your group and outside)?
- How might the GWAC church community as a whole manifest the love of God at this time?

## A Personal Response

Even though people who believe in Jesus are totally forgiven, we still need to deal with sin on a day-to-day basis in order to experience continuing fellowship with God. Sin grieves and impedes the Spirit's directing and empowering of our lives. The following is a simple practice that has helped many people to concretely restore fellowship with God. This is a tool to use to help you reflect and be specific about dealing with sin.

### Confession—agreeing with God about sin

When God brings to your attention an area of your life or a specific act that falls short of God's standards, confess it. This confession involves at least three factors:

- Agree with God that you have sinned. (Call it sin)
- Agree that God has already forgiven you. (Call it forgiven)
- Trust God to change your attitudes and actions toward Him and turn away from your sin. (Call on God to change you)

In the days of the New Testament, a "list of sins" meant an itemised bond nailed to a prison cell door that listed every crime for which the prisoner had been convicted. When the sentence had been fully served or restitution paid, the authorities wrote "paid in full" across the list. A prisoner could use this as proof that they could never be tried for those crimes again. The believer who trusts Christ's payment for sin can never be tried again. They have full pardon from God.

In a like manner, follow the exercise below:

#### 1) List your sins

Begin by asking God to reveal every sin in your life and any area that has displeased Him. Take pen and paper and privately list every sin He brings to mind. As you write, confess each of them to God.

#### 2) Write God's promise across the list

After you have written the sins God reveals to you, write God's promise of forgiveness from 1 John 1:9 across the list such that it covers what was written: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

#### 3) Destroy the list

Accept His forgiveness by faith, then destroy the list as an illustration of the forgiveness God has granted you.

#### 4) Make restitution

Where needed, apologise to someone, ask someone to forgive you, or some other act to demonstrate turning away from the actions confessed. Experiencing forgiveness often involves making restitution.