

1 John 4:16 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

4:16a Abiding in love is evidence of abiding in God and God abiding in us. John lets us know that he too experiences this process of coming to know the love of God, just like all other Christians. We should expect this experience of God revealing His love more and more to us as His Children.

John says that we have come to know. A knowledge of basic facts must precede belief, since in order to believe in something, and especially to put trust or faith in something, we must know and understand who God is! It is necessary to know what is to be believed. As Paul says in 2 Tim 1:12 **12 For this reason I also suffer these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to protect what I have entrusted to Him until that day.** It's the knowing God, that brings the faith in Him.

At one time in our life, we were ignorant of the grace and great provision of God sending Jesus to die for our sins. We didn't know Him. And we lived, doing whatever we wanted, some sinning less, because of Christian up-bringing or conscience (Romans 2:14-15), while others, whether through lack of a moral upbringing, or adverse childhood experiences, or other factors may sin much more, and ignore their conscience, hiding their heads in the sand, thinking that God had not seen, God had not noticed. But He does.

These two Greek words, egnōkamen ("know") and pepisteukamen ("rely" or "believe"), are closely connected--they both concern the object of love—we can't know God without believing on Him and relying on Him. Knowing and believing are an abiding characteristic of the Christian's life, not a one-time thing long ago. Faith and love are at the same time fruit and evidence of one who is indwelt by God. It is this indwelling that makes the fruit possible.

The Holy Spirit allows us to dwell, to remain, to abide in the Love of God. The love that dwells in the community of God's children, the Church, and the mutual love that we have for one another is His love imparted to us! More than that: the God of love imparts Himself to His people, so dwelling within them that they, in their turn, dwell in His love and dwell in Him." This is a fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus: **"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them"** (John 17:26).

Now, in Christ, we know and have come to believe, and are now confident in the love of God toward us. Because we know Him, we know that we can trust Him with our souls. The more that we really know the wonderful, loving God as He is, the more our saving confession of faith in Him is proven to be sitting on the Firm Foundation of Jesus, the Rock, the cornerstone of our faith. And so, we can build our lives on this firm foundation of faith, believing in Him for love and provision throughout our lives. If we know God, we will continue to have this kind of saving faith in Him, through trials and the pain and the heartache. To a Christian who knows and believes who God really is, as revealed in the person and work of Jesus, there's no turning back, no-where else to go. In John 6, when many found Jesus' teachings too hard, and many no longer walked with Him, He asked the Apostles, "You do not want to leave also, do you"? In John 6:68 **68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 And we have already believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."** Knowing Jesus allows no substitute foundation for our lives. To a Christian, there is no other solid rock. Once we have found Him, we hold on to Him for dear life, for dear soul. 1 Cor 3:10 **10 By the grace**

God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. There's no other foundation which we can trust. True knowledge of God deep down in the heart will always result in faith and trust in Him, because when we know Him, we know His character. True knowledge of God and faith in Him are in a sense "inseparable", since to really know God is to love Him and Trust Him. We have come to know and believe that God really does love us with a fathomless, everlasting, immeasurable love, and that He will never leave us or forsake us, because of that love.

God's love toward us

So, we come to know, rely on, believe in God's love in us, and with us. This brings us back to the beginning of this paragraph, in verse 13: **13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.** We know God's love by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to continually confess Jesus as the Son of God in Faith by the way testifying of what He has done in our lives, and allowing Him to work through our lives. I see this verse as describing truly knowing God, relying on His love in us and through us, as we allow the Holy Spirit to mold us into the image of Christ, and allow Him to express His love for others through us. This is what happens when we obey Jesus' commandment in John 13:34-35 **34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."** We become more like Jesus, and are truly disciples of Jesus, when we allow Him to love our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and love the World through us.

God is love

We can't talk about our love for God without talking about God's love for us. As 1st John 4 verse 19 is going to tell us: **We love God, because He first loved us.** There is mutual love, first God's love for believers and believers' expression of that love for other believers in community with each other. It's a term about God's character but should never be seen as defining Him. Why? Because God is so much more than love...He is Holy, Righteous, Just...omniscient, omnipresent, all-powerful. As before, this statement cannot be reversed. Love is not God any more than light. However, love is a key expression of how God is active in this world, and demonstrates a central point of His character as it relates to our fellowship with Him and His dealings with mankind.

and the one abiding in love abides in God and God abides in him.

So, because God is love, John lets us know what this means for us. Just as John illustrated what God being light (moral purity) meant for us—since it requires our moral purity for fellowship, and His being righteous demands our righteousness, so, too, His love demands we be loving if we are to commune with Him. Only believers can love with God's kind of love. Speaking of the love of God, as many often do, is not enough. The confession of the incarnate Christ and acknowledgment of his atonement and Lordship are necessary. Without this combination, this mutual abiding is not possible.