

connect 360

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

GC2 Strong

A GREAT COMMANDMENT AND GREAT COMMISSION AWAKENING

A BIBLICAL THEME STUDY

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Tamiko Jones
Rolando Aguirre



Dallas, Texas

*GC2 Strong: A Great Commandment and Great Commission Awakening
Connect 360 Bible Study Guide*

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Introducing

GC2 Strong

A Great Commandment and Great Commission Awakening

A Biblical Theme Study

What does GC2 does it mean? GC2 stands for the **G**reat **C**ommandment (Matthew 22:35–40) and the **G**reat **C**ommission (Matthew 28:16–20) which are the **2** major summary teachings of Christ. Jesus summed up the Law and the Prophets by declaring that the most important commandment is to Love God with all of one’s heart, soul, and mind, and the closely related second commandment is to love other people as oneself. Before ascending back to the Father Jesus who had spent three years training, teaching, demonstrating, and preparing His disciples—gave them His final instruction the Great Commission to carry His message of love to make more disciples for Him throughout the entire world.

Not unlike the people living in Palestine 2,000 years ago, people today are isolated, hurting, and without hope and direction in their lives. Many throughout the world live in fear and without the most basic necessities of life. God showed up then with the ultimate transformative message and mission given to His Son. Jesus’ work of reconciliation and forgiveness did not stop after

His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, He commanded His followers to spread everywhere and to all the good news of God's Kingdom that any who believe in Jesus will be saved from their sin and adopted into God's family.

The Church was birthed to continue this mission of God, and strong, healthy churches will keep GC2 in the forefront of their ministries, missions, worship, preaching, and education. There is an epidemic occurring in churches today. In recent studies, about 85% of all churches have either plateaued or are in decline. A significant percentage of these will likely close their doors. GC2 Strong is a call for churches to re-evaluate their participation in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, to listen to God's leading, and follow the Holy Spirit to find new energy and ways to share Christ and show His love. God's mission has not changed. God seeks to reconcile people from every nation, tribe, language, and culture to Himself through a relationship with Jesus Christ. A strong healthy church through the power of the Holy Spirit will be consumed with God's love, grow stronger together through Bible learning, worship, prayer, and fellowship, and from that will vigorously proclaim the gospel and demonstrate love to others by meeting their needs.

Will you and your church pray about having a Great Commandment and Great Commission Awakening? Will you pray for eyes to see how God is inviting your church to a new work to show love to your community and have the opportunities to share Jesus' message of hope and forgiveness? Will you listen and explore ways that you and your church can go and proclaim the gospel to people in another state or country, to a different culture, and maybe in another language? Will you consider what financial,

time, and activity priorities you need to change to help accomplish this?

These thirteen lessons seek to help you and your church be filled with God's Spirit and love and grow closer to Him by taking the next step in discipleship. You will learn not only about GC2 but how your church can grow closer together and display your love for God and one another as a testimony to the world. You will discover the missionary God who sent the model missionary Jesus so that all may hear, respond, and receive adoption into God's family. You will explore how God is calling you and your church to be on mission with Christ to go where He sends and show love in actions to whom He wants to reach and love. Many disciples are needed to join God in His great mission. Disciples deny themselves, commit allegiance to the Lord, and go as Christ leads and calls.

What will be your role in the Great Commission and Great Commandment?

Suggested Resources for the Study of GC2 Strong¹

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NOTE

¹ Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writer or GC2 Press with all its comments.

GC2 Strong

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A Bible Theme Study

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lesson 1

God's Love Fuels His Mission

MAIN IDEA

The only way for Christians to truly show love is to be consumed with God's Love.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

How do I show God's love to others?

STUDY AIM

To understand that an awakened church will dwell in Christ's love and proclaim and demonstrate that love in Jesus' name

QUICK READ

Love comes from God as demonstrated in Christ the Savior, and we can only know Him in that love. Thus, we can only authentically love others by abiding in Christ and sharing His love with them.

Introduction

In a world inundated with art, songs, novels, and movies that project some concept of love, how are we to present a different perspective on love? In preparation for this, I asked Google AI: “How many songs in the English language have love as the theme?” The response was: “No one has ever counted them, but the estimate is over 100 million songs.”

So, there are over an estimated 100 million songs dealing with love in the English language. How many books somehow related to love? Millions and millions more. And movies? Most movies have love depicted in some way in the movie. All this reveals that humans are very interested in love and think they are familiar with what love is and why.

Lest you despair, today's lesson focuses on love from one collection of books, which is the Bible. Today we are going to study one of the crown jewel Bible passages on the subject of love. Our study focuses on love as presented in 1 John 4:7-21. The other crown jewel of love passage in the Bible is 1 Corinthians 13.

One of the interesting things about John's presentation of love in this chapter is that the love being presented here is the Greek word *agape*, God's love. This love is a superlative love, which finds its existence in the nature of God, and was tangibly revealed to us through Jesus and all He did to reveal God to us. Jesus lived love on behalf of us and sacrificed His life to bring the forgiveness of our sins, and the restoration of those who believe to a life-sharing relationship with Him, and with the Father, and the Spirit.

God's love was concretely revealed and manifested in and through Jesus when He came giving His all to make it possible for us to share in God's love and to have God's love and life come to live within us as we believe. It is a sacrificial love, which surrendered His own life on behalf of those He loves. It is a transforming love that changes the nature and life of those who connect with God through Jesus. God's love comes to live in us. His love transforms and changes us from being selfish to becoming selfless, from being hateful to loving others, from being human centered to becoming God centered.

This love is not something abstract like an emotion or an idea. It is the nature of God Himself, who came to us in the person of Jesus, and loved us even when we were enemies (Romans 5:6–10). He came to reside within those who believe, bringing the life of God and His love to come and live within us. His indwelling love and presence reshapes our core values and passions and transforms us into being love-revealers through the manner in which we love one another and even love our enemies.

When Scripture says, "God is love," it does not reduce God to one attribute or define Him by an abstract principle. Rather, it declares that God's holy, personal, and triune nature is revealed through loving action, most clearly in the sending of His Son. Love does not define God independently; God defines love through who He is and what He has done in Christ.

1 John 4:7–21

⁷ Beloved, let's love one another; for love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ By this the love of God was revealed in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we may 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 propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we remain in Him and He in us, because He has given to us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. ¹⁷ By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, we also are in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us. ²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and yet he hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother and sister whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

Agape Love

Agape is a love that originates in God Himself. Scripture does not present love as an abstract principle that defines God, but as an expression of who God eternally is in His holy, personal, and relational nature. Because God is love, all true love flows from Him and is revealed most fully through His saving action in Jesus Christ.

His love is far superior to any other kind of love. John wrote that “God is love (*agape*)” (see verse 8). This love is a love that is embodied in God and at the heart of His very nature. It is a love of action and movement, always moving toward the one loved, lifting up, or assisting the loved one. *Agape* love is alive and active, moving, expanding, and overflowing out of God into others, and out of the believer in whom God lives. *Agape* is personal, it is revealed through a living being’s actions. *Agape* love is also active and is shown through actions, as love moves us to take action to helpfully assist another being. *Agape* creates value in the person receiving such love; being loved makes each of us realize we are valuable, as evidenced in the fact that somebody loves and values us. Love helps us realize we are a person of worth and value to God, and others.

God Is Love (4:7–8)

John plainly states in these two verses that God is love (*agape*). This love is not mushy or sentimental. It is not emotional flour-

ishes or impulsive reactions. The Greek language had numerous words and concepts of love. There is erotic (*eros*) love, which is a response to a stimulus. If the stimulation is not there, then neither is the responsive "love." This is why *eros* is an inadequate love to sustain a relationship. It can be as fickle as your leg when the doctor whacks your kneecap with a hammer. Just because your leg reacts, it doesn't mean you are in love. *Phileo* love is a love affiliated with family, a love from position and duty, thus Philadelphia is known as the city of brotherly love.

God did not just speak a lot of nice words about us humans; nor does He enter into long dialogues with us that are filled with poems and platitudes. Love is not just talk; it is mainly our walk. It is not mere words; it is character, maturity, and self-sacrifice for the betterment of the one loved. When Christ dwells in us by His Spirit, God's love abides in us as well. This love is not a one-time possession, but a living reality that is increasingly expressed and matured as we continue to abide in Christ and walk in obedience to Him. It comes in when Jesus comes in, because God is love (*agape*).

Agape love is an act of the will; it is choosing to do something that will make a positive impact on the loved one. It is not dependent upon the worthiness of the recipient, nor upon their nastiness. God loved us while we were still rejecting Him, while we were mocking Him, while we were crucifying His one unique Son.

God's Love for Us Was Manifested Through Jesus Dying in Our Place, to Restore Us to a Living Relationship With God (4:7–9)

How do we know God is love? How do we know that God loves us? In verse 9 John told us the answer: “By this the love of God was revealed in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.” He continues in verse 10 to say that God “sent His Son to be the propitiation [payment, sacrifice] for our sins.” God sent His only unique Son to take all our sins upon the cross, and suffer in our place, and die in our place, so we can be reconciled to God. Many are those who say, “I love you,” but only One would be willing to die in our place. God’s love is revealed in all its depth, height, breadth, and length in the coming of His only Son who willingly died in our place that we might experience the love of God and have our lives transformed.

Paul said it this way in Romans 5:6–10:

For while we were still helpless, at *the* right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous person; though perhaps for the good person someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

God did not just say “I love you!” He demonstrated His deep love for us. In Jesus, He suffered and died on our behalf, to trans-

fer us from death to life, from alienation to restoration, from hatred to love, from selfishness to self-sacrificial love shown to others. He comes to live within the believer, filling us with Himself, which also fills us with His love. He desires us to love others in word and deed, not just in words.

We Who Have Received God's Love Are to Now Manifest God's Love to Others Because God Himself Is Loving Others Through Us (4:7–8, 11–12)

God's love was manifested and demonstrated through Jesus loving people of all sorts and dispositions. He loved us while we were yet His enemies and corrupted sinners. Now we are called "beloved." We are those who "be loved." We are those who are recipients of the phenomenal love of God. We have been cleansed, forgiven, given a new life, new purpose, new power, and new love.

Beloved, we who have been loved by God, are now to love one another. The love is to flow both ways! We are to demonstrate God's love to each other, a love which is patient, kind, not envious, a love that puts the needs of others before our own, that gives to others, encourages others, forgives others, trusts others, builds up others, and works together as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 13:4–7). The Church, as His Body, is to manifest the majesty of God and Jesus through the love and activities of each other as believers, and in and through our Bible Study groups and as church members working together to give a more complete image of the love of God to a love-thirsty world.

In 4:12, God is telling us as His church that since no person has seen God at any time, we as His body (the Church) need to be actively loving God, loving each other, loving people in the neighborhood, people at work, people similar to us, and people very different from us. We are together to love everyone we meet in such a way that they experience God and Jesus through us as a church group, and us as individuals. Since God has so loved us, has loved us in such kind, patient, generous, and magnanimous ways, shouldn't we then also love one another, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for our benefit?

What Are Some Evidences or Proofs That God Is Alive in Us, and in Our Church? (4:12–21)

As believers who have Christ living in our life, and as church members serving Christ together, there are numerous evidences or indicators of Christ manifesting through us the complete dynamics of the love of God to a love-thirsty world.

Talk is cheap, but our deeds proclaim our beliefs and bring them to completion or fruition. God, by nature, is love (*agape*), a unique love that originates in His very being. *Agape* is a volitional love that chooses to love us, not based upon who we are, but based upon who God is (4:12).

We know we abide in God, because He has given us His Spirit (4:13). God's Spirit in us brings the love of God into us, and also confirms that we are connected to Him, the source of *agape* love. As we love one another, God's love is perfected; it comes to completion, reaches its goal and end. By encountering God, we

experientially know that God has sent Jesus into the world to be the Savior of the world (4:14).

This is our message, which also becomes our life! Whoever confesses (confirms and is committed to) Jesus as the Son of God, and who makes their home in Him, as Jesus also makes His home in us, becomes continually connected with God (4:15). As a result of this, we have come to know the certainty of the love that God has for us (4:16). The person whose life is a continuous flow of His love, who abides in His love, keeps the love flowing in both directions, from God to us, and from us to God and others.

Our capability to love begins with experiencing God's love for us and to us (4:16), which then gives us the ability to love God, and other people. As we deeply get to know the depth of God's love for us, we are changed. Being loved and valued by God, changes anyone, and everyone, who comes to grips with such love (4:16).

God is love. Notice, it does not say: "Love is God." God, by nature is love: He is always reaching out to us, affirming us, encouraging us, challenging us, and creating value in us. As we bathe in His love, we really get to know Him (4:16). The ultimate experience of God's love is that His love for us casts out all fear (4:18), for fear has to do with punishment, but love has to do with forgiveness and restoration (4:18). Love drives out our fears. God initiated all of this. We love Him, because He first loved us (4:19). We love others, because God has graciously extended love, mercy, and forgiveness to us. If God, who is perfect, and whose standards are "out of this world," can forgive us, who are we not to forgive someone who offended us?

If someone says they love God, but then lives in hatred of a brother in Christ, that person is a liar; for if you can't love the

brother you can see and interact with, then how can you love God whom you cannot see? If you can't love in the tangible physical world, how can you love in the spiritual realm?

John's simple conclusion in 4:21: If you really know and love God, you will lovingly interact with other believers. The one who loves God, should also love God's other children as well. Since God has loved us in such kind, patient, generous and magnanimous ways, shouldn't we then also love one another, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for our benefit?

Implications and Applications

When we love each other, like God loves us, and love people of all sorts with the love with which Christ has loved us, then God is manifested to them. They encounter the reality of God's love made visible through Christlike actions.

Because God's love is revealed in Christ and abides in us as we walk with Him, loving God and loving others are not separate commands, but a single, lived response to the gospel. When love continually flows in and out of our lives, and God's character is experienced through our loving actions toward others, God's love is made perfect (arrives at its destination, reaches the goal) and complete in our lives. Love is shown more through our walk (actions and kindness) than through our talk.

Questions

1. Love is action. It is love that is demonstrated through character, kindness, thoughtfulness, and concrete affirma-

tion or assistance. Love is something you do! Who needs you to manifest *agape* love to them today?

2. Write down three ways you can demonstrate the love your family member needs today, then put your plan into action.

3. Who in your neighborhood needs to experience a practical demonstration of Christ's love for them? What can you do to practically show love to them? Plan it, pray, then do it!

4. What could your church or church group do to impact people who aren't connected with your church? How can you manifest the Great Commandment and Great Commission to them?

5. Do you wish to pursue improving your practical skills of demonstrating *agape* love immensely? Consider using a book specifically designed to facilitate such efforts. *Doing Love! It Can Change Your Life!* by Dr. Ed Jordan provides a daily format to create new ways to daily impact others with God's love and help a believer put Christ's love into action.