

# To Know To Believe To Live – Module 1 Official Handout

02.13.21 Version

Developed by Msgr. Michael Clay

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## GOD IS LOVE AND LOVES YOU MORE THAN YOU'LL EVER FULLY KNOW ON THIS SIDE OF ETERNITY

### I. Essential relational questions everyone must answer to live as an adult:

- A. Who's going to love me?
- B. Does my life have meaning?

The Christian kerygma provides the Christian with critical avenues to answer these questions both on a human and divine level, both essential in helping a person live life in a fulfilling way.

### II. "God is love" gives meaning to our lives because **to love and be loved** gives meaning to our lives. Every dimension of kerygma is rooted in/emanates from this belief and ultimately returns to this belief

### III. God is love and loves you more than you'll ever fully know on this side of eternity.

#### A. God is Love

1. God is love and those who abide in love abide in God and God in them." (I John 4: 16)
2. Important to understand what St. John means by "love" so we understand who God is
3. Four types of love:
  - a. Storge: affection, natural empathy that comes from familiarity
  - b. Philios: friendship, something freely chosen
  - c. Eros: passionate love between two people or about some endeavor in life
  - d. Agape: totally unselfish love that never expects or requires reciprocity
4. "God is love." John's verb is *agapao* (agape).
  - a. Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit enjoy perfect love among one another
  - b. St. Bernard of Clairvaux: God is the lover, Jesus is the beloved, Holy Spirit is the kiss
  - c. Because it is agape type of love, it perpetually overflows into creation
  - d. "God is love" means that God is the most self-sacrificial being in the universe. The entire universe exists because God is *agapao* (agape).
5. Discussion/Reflection Questions:
  - a. How do you define "love" for yourself today (apart from what was presented in this video)? Who or what has contributed/ shaped this definition?
  - b. When you think of God, what first comes to mind? What experiences helped to form this image of God?
  - c. Is there a person you know whose love comes close to agape? What behaviors or traits define this person?
  - d. How would you explain "God is love" to someone else? What words or images might help in this endeavor?

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## B. God loves you more than you'll ever fully know on this side of eternity.

1. In the midst of this unfathomable vastness, each of us exists and is personally known by God.
2. God knows each of us, totally and completely, our thoughts, actions, choices, fears, hopes, and dreams.
3. God has known us from the foundations of the world and always loves us.
4. Encounters with God's love:
  - a. John and the Holy Spirit
  - b. Msgr. Clay
  - c. St. Teresa of Calcutta
  - d. Incremental Awareness over Course of Life
  - e. Rublev Trinity Icon (1410): We are invited to join them at the table
5. Discussion/Reflection Questions:
  - a. Do you believe that "God loves you?" What helps you believe this is true for you? What makes it challenging to believe this is true for you?
  - b. If, at some level, you believe that "God loves you more than you'll ever fully know on this side of eternity," how does/might this immeasurable, unceasing love give your life meaning?
  - c. How may God be calling you to respond to this love?
  - d. How can this love be imitated and reflected in your relationships with others?

## C. Optional Post-Session Reflection (For Group Discussion at Start of Next Module):

Reflect on where you are currently in knowing, believing, and living that God is love and loves you more than you'll fully know on this side of eternity and how you might be invited to take another step forward in growing in any of these areas of faith.

TO KNOW: Know facts about the faith

TO BELIEVE: Believing the facts about the faith for me personally

TO LIVE: Living my knowledge and/or belief through my words and actions

## IV. A Prayer:

Thank you for loving me just as I am.  
You loved me even before I was conceived,  
    when you saw all of my days—the bad as well as the good.  
You loved me before I did a single thing to respond to your love.  
You persist in loving me even when I turn away from you and do not follow your ways.  
Thank you for loving me with an everlasting love,  
    a love that never varies or changes.  
You call me your beloved and I call you my God.

Amen.