

Week 6 – 1 John 3:11-18

Love One Another

“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” ([1 John 3:18](#), ESV)

Our previous discussion related to those who are a child of God or a child of the devil. The two criteria were to practice righteousness and love your brother ([1 John 3:10](#)). John now expands on the meaning of what it is to love your brother.

John speaks of four different levels of relationships in which we can choose to live:

- Murder ([1 John 3:11-12, 15](#))
- Hatred ([1 John 3:13-15](#))
- Indifference ([1 John 3:16-17](#)), and
- Christian love in action ([1 John 3:18](#)).

The mark of the Christian is love for one another. The standard for that love is the pattern of Christ's love for us. *Our practice proclaims who and what we are in Christ.*

- **1 John 3:11** - *“For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”*

We must go right back to the beginning and determine what the apostles originally heard from Jesus and taught their first converts. There are several passages from the Gospels where Jesus calls for us to love our neighbor ([Matthew 5:43-44](#), [19:19](#), [23:29](#); [Mark 12:31](#); [John 15:12](#)). But the original call to love is from the Old Testament ([Leviticus 19:18](#)).

In reminding them of this message to love one another, John himself was remembering the command of Jesus:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” ([John 13:34](#), ESV)

The moral imperative for Christians to love one another was at the heart of the apostolic Gospel. And it still is. From the very beginning, from the very first time they heard the Gospel, John's readers knew beyond any doubt that God would expect and empower them to love one another.

Only when we see, believe, and cherish the goodness of God will we be free to entrust ourselves and our futures into his hands. Only then will we be free to forget about ourselves; genuinely to love someone else.

- **1 John 3:12** – *“We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.”*

The following teaching about the essence of love comes to us as negative and positive contrasting pictures. [1 John 3:12](#) shows us the negative example. Cain, who in his hatred and ultimate murder of his brother Abel, is the prototype of the world. His example, John says, is not at all to be followed by Christians.

The positive example comes in [1 John 3:16–18](#). That is Jesus Christ, whose example of self-sacrificial love is to be imitated and followed by us as his disciples. We will further address this below.

According to [Hebrews 11:4](#), Abel's sacrifice was acceptable to God because he offered it in faith. Cain's sacrifice apparently was not. And Cain's lack of faith led to hatred for his brother, which rose until it resulted in murder and even rebellion against God.

The example of Able and Cain is the first instance of hatred one brother has for another, and shows the contrast between the children of God and the children of the devil – those who belong to God, and those who belong to the devil.

Consider the following presentation by Jordan Peterson: "[Don't Let the 'Spirit of Cain' in You.](#)" (4:21)

➤ **1 John 3:13** – *“Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters*, that the world hates you.”*

John presents Cain to us as the model of the world. The "world," that is, humanity aligned in rebellion against God, is Cain's legacy and it will continue to respond to righteousness in the same way he did.

The difference between Cain and Abel was in Cain, not in Abel. Cain (the world) hates Abel (the righteous). Look at Joseph and his brethren. Look at David and Saul; read the story of how King Saul treated David and tried to get rid of him – the jealousy, envy, and malice. Look at the treatment the prophets endured – those men of God who were trying to save the nation. It is everywhere.

The application to the believer's life is that others may hate us the way Cain hated Abel, possibly even to the point of killing us. Do not be surprised when people of this world hate you. It is their nature ([1 John 5:19](#)).

“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” ([John 17:14](#)).

However, don't be like Cain. Don't descend to their level. Resist that primal urge to return hate with hate, murder with murder. Rather,

“... if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” ([Mark 6:11](#), ESV)

If the world hated Jesus Christ, the personification of goodness, how much more will they hate us who do not have the character of the Savior? The world hates Christians because it can see the difference between our godly lives and its own evil. Embrace Christ and the world will be your enemy. Any professing Christian warmly embraced by the world at large should reexamine the reality of his claim to discipleship.

Hatred from the outside world should increase the believers' love for one another. Where the gospel has taken root, love will be the natural fruit. The gospel has changed you, and love is at the heart of the gospel message.

Many believers in America are totally unaware of the martyrdom (Satanically influenced murder of saints, just as Cain's hatred prompted him to slay Abel). Take a moment to click on the [Voice of Martyr's](#) map that gives details of ongoing persecution of believers today.

➤ **1 John 3:14** – *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers and sisters*. Whoever does not love abides in death.”*

John makes an **IF/THEN** conditional logic statement here. Actually, it is in reverse order, but the logic is the same: **IF** “we love the brothers and sisters”, **THEN** “we know that we have passed out of death into life.”

A love for the people of God is a basic sign of being born again. If it is present, it gives us assurance. If this love is not evident in our lives, we can question our salvation.

This world is not our home, and when we live like it is, we are the most miserable of creatures! Jesus came to rescue us from this darkness and to give us the light of life and give it abundantly ([John 10:10](#)).

You can know (and experience) eternal life now, for Jesus said,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." ([John 5:24](#), ESV)

Also see [John 3:36](#).

The contrary is also true. "He who does not love abides in death," just as he is "in darkness" according to [1 John 2:9](#), and [1 John 2:11](#).

Later in his letter, John further addresses the last sentence in this verse: "*Whoever does not love abides in death.*"

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." ([1 John 4:20](#), ESV)

Lifestyles of love and hate are very revealing. They reveal whether one abides in death or whether he has indeed passed out of death into life. People who persistently and consistently love other people in heartfelt ways that are practical and sacrificial can have assurance that they indeed possess the eternal life of God himself. Brothers and sisters, loving one another is not a trivial thing; it is not optional. Loving one another is critically important, eternally important. It is a matter of life and death.

- **1 John 3:15** – *"Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."*

Not loving is hating, and hating is murder. John is saying that God sees them as actual murderers (even if they have not committed the physical act) because He sees the continual hatred in their heart. Jesus makes this comparison in [Matthew 5:21-22](#). Anyone who holds on to a spirit of bitter hatred and hostility towards a brother or sister cannot possibly be at the same time indwelt by the life of the Holy Spirit of God. A person's life characterized by persistent hatred gives evidence that they have never "passed out of death into life." A person governed by a spirit of hate does not possess eternal life. That lack of love is evidence of spiritual death.

Love and hate are mutually exclusive! Love gives life, but hate takes a life. Eternal life springs from an indwelling God, and God cannot dwell in the heart where hatred and malice dwell. Christian love characterizes the church. Hatred characterizes the world.

- **1 John 3:16** – *"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters*."*

John now addresses a positive example in contrast to the above negative example of [1 John 3:12](#). That is Jesus Christ, whose example of self-sacrificial love is to be imitated and followed by us as his disciples.

If you want to see what this love is, look at Jesus Christ. His death for us on the cross fully displays this. The Christian life should be the imitation of Christ.

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...." ([Philippians 2:5](#), ESV).

This Christ-like love is not love that feels as much as it is a love that acts, the ultimate demonstration being by what He did. If you're running short on love, stop and meditate on what Jesus did for you.

I would argue that this love goes beyond merely dying for another. It also means to live for another. By living your life in service to others, you have metaphorically laid down your life for another. In fact, it might be easier to commit a single act and die for another than to live your entire life for others.

The test of Christian love is not simply a failure to do evil to others. Love also involves doing them good. Christian love is both positive and negative. *“Cease to do evil; learn to do good”* ([Isaiah 1:16–17](#)).

- **1 John 3:17** – *“But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?”*

Like Jesus' use of parables, it is John's practice to provide an example to illustrate what he has just told them.

How can we know whether we would sacrifice our life for a brother? We can know by being compassionate toward him in his present need. The test of true love lies not so much in heroic actions as in matters of daily experience and in committing to the needs of others. If we are unable or unwilling to sacrifice material advantage for the sake of our brother, we know the love of God is not in us.

This example goes beyond the generalization to love one another, but is very specific to a brother in need. The transition from the plural (our brothers) to the singular (brother) is deliberate and significant.

“It is easier to be enthusiastic about Humanity with a capital “H” than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved, or otherwise unattractive. Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular!” (Borrow [The Letters of John page 146](#))

Also, consider this from Moses to the Israelites in the Old Testament: [Deuteronomy 15:7-11](#).

- **1 John 3:18** – *“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”*

This call to action is based on the previous discussion of the need for believers to love their brother. John's call first gives the negative and then the positive. He says, “Don't just talk about love, but practice it”. Actions speak louder than words, and we should always be eager to express our love in deeds as well as by our lips. Do something about meeting the other's need!

This is like the call to action in James' epistle.

“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?” ([James 2:15-16](#), ESV)

Demonstrating love in meeting the physical, material, and spiritual needs of others is love in truth. Use of “truth” here is probably an idiom that means “actually” or “really.”

It may be helpful to summarize the teaching in this passage about hatred and love. Hatred characterizes the world, whose prototype is Cain. It originates in the devil, issues in murder, and is evidence of spiritual death. Love characterizes the church, whose prototype is Christ. It originates in God, issues in self-sacrifice, and is evidence of eternal life.

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” ([Matthew 7:24](#), ESV)

1 John Commentary – Precept Austin

https://www.preceptaustin.org/1_john_311_commentary

COMPARISON OF THOUGHT AND STYLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE

First Epistle of John Chapters 3		Gospel of John
1 John 3:13	Hated by the World	John 15:19, 17:14

* In verses 3:13, 14, & 16, in New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word [adelphoi](#) usually translated “brothers,” may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*. I have chosen to use the later in this context. If you wish more information on this, please read the following article: “[The Translation of Αδελφος and Αδελφοι](#)” by Michael D. Marlowe, 2004