

**Loving One Another**  
**The Priority and Practice**  
1 John 3:11-18

This passage in John makes me think of **another John ... Johnny Cash. Any Johnny Cash fans? I don't like country music at all, but I do like Cash. I like Johnny Cash for many reasons; he wears black and he's my favorite singer for karaoke performances. I think about him here because Johnny Cash has a compilation CD that is united by three great themes in his music: *Love, God, & Murder!* That's what 1 John 3:11-18 is about basically. If we are going to *grow* individually and as a church we need to heed these words.**

### **Big Picture of 1 John**

Part of John's purpose for writing is to **provide assurance** to his readers that they are children of God. He's answering the question,

- "How do you know if you're in the family of God?"
- "How does one know if he or she is truly a son or daughter of God?"

**5:13** is somewhat of a purpose statement...

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may **know** that you have eternal life.*

1 John 5:13

**"know"** - He uses this word some **40 times** in 1 John. He is writing to a group that were living in a day of **theological vagueness**, like our day.

John's opponents were teaching something that was akin to the new age movement; very mystical, it had to do with a form of esoteric knowledge that was devoid of **practical reality**... Sort of like you something you might hear today "affirm the inner light within you,m"not "repent of sin, trust Jesus and follow him." It was mystical, vague...

But John is writing to **provide distinction**

- Dark/Light; Children of the Devil/Children of the Father; Truth/Lies; Life/Death; Love/Hate
- **How do you know?** (4 Tests for authentic faith)
  1. **Truth Test:** Jesus is God and Savior. He's come in the flesh and he is the Christ. He died as a substitute. (1:1, 4:2, 5:1)
  2. **Righteousness Test:** Practicing Righteousness (2:3-4; 2:29)
  3. **Relational Test:** loving one another (3:23; 4:7-12; 5:1). **3:10** puts these two and three together:
  4. **Spiritual/Experiential Test** (3:24; 5:12)

Don't be deceived (1John 2:19)

Our focus is on this relational dimension. Now, we all need help in this area of love because...

1. **We are made for relationships. Lewis, death of Charles, lost part of Ronald (Tolkien)..**
2. **We all face conflicts.** How many of you have at least one relational conflict? How many of you are sitting next to that person?
3. **Our culture has a warped view of love.** We need to take our cues from Holy Scripture.
4. **Sometimes we disagree.** Loving one another doesn't mean we always agree, but it does mean we love the people of God. And we can agree to disagree agreeably over matters that are not of first importance.
5. **The watching world will know that we are Jesus' disciples is by a particular love for one another.** It is critically important that we understand the truth of the gospel as we seek to contend for the faith. But we need more than doctrinal truth; we need love.  
... Students loving professors...Professors loving students...  
Many reject authority... older people look down upon younger generation... bullies exist in evangelicalism... many are envious of others instead of loving them... arrogance abounds... Is there love on this campus?

**Francis Schaffer** said there is the apologetic rarely used: loving one another. He called it, "the final apologetic." He said, "**The world has the right to look upon us as we, as true Christians ... [and] observe that we do love each other. Our love must have a form that the world may observe, it must be seeable.**" Where did he ever get such an idea? It's actually not Schaffer's idea; it's Jesus' idea. The Apostle John also echoes the words of Jesus in this passage.

**READ.** In keeping with the idea of a test, I want to raise three questions from this text concerning loving one another...

**#1: Do you see the importance of this love? (3:11-15)**

**A. It is at the heart of our message (11)**

"the message we heard from the beginning" – meaning the apostolic Gospel or that which Jesus taught. (**10X in John**).

I believe John was Jesus' closest friend, "the apostle of love" "the apostle whom Jesus loved"

"I've got nothing new," John says. He said that earlier (1 John 2:7).

While methods may change from time to time, the heart of Christianity is unchanging.

- An essential part of that which "they've heard" is that Christians must "love one another." Are you a follower of Jesus, or a fan of Jesus?
- Present tense – continual love among the family of God.

Now, Jesus taught about at least 7 "types" of love: (1) Love for God; (2) Love for neighbor; (3) Love for enemies, (4) Love for least of these; (5) Love for strangers, (6) Family, (7) Love for one another.

When did he talk about #7?

### John 13:34-35

- **It's a new Commandment** in that Jesus **modeled it, and empowered it.**
  - Commandment – under authority
  - D.A. said, "The new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorize and appreciate, profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice: love one another."
- **The Commandment Again** in John 15:12, 17
  - This is the only commandment that begins this way
  - He has issued many – 1,400 commands in the NT, but this one is "**my commandment**"
  - His commandment is just as important as those that God wrote with his finger.

### Questions

- How seriously have you taken this command of Jesus Christ? Do you take it as seriously as the command, "Do not commit adultery?"
- Do you think you can habitually break it?
- Is this issue on your mind when you gather for worship?
- Is your conversation about other believers indicative of keeping this commandment?
- Do you view the church as a place to hear a little singing, a little preaching, and exercise your religious freedom – **or do you view the church as a people for whose well being you are personally responsible?** I am my brother's keeper

**How did he model it?** “As I have loved you.” He washed feet.

- **Most guys in our culture even with a daily shower, and fast acting tinactin still know that feet stink. Some of you know how your feet smell, and it is evidence that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God!** The last thing we want to do is clean another guy's feet.
- Jesus redefines greatness – it is not raw, power, outdoing your peers – *it is the towel, considering others first.*
- All of this is a foreshadowing of an even greater display of humility – the cross, (which we will observe in a moment)

**Judas' feet - If I had a large basin of water, I would put his head in it.**

- Jesus has given this guy three years; he has 15 hours to live, and he washes his feet.

### The Others

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news?”

**Peter's feet (6) – It is quiet until he comes to Peter! The only time he opened his mouth was to change feet!**

Loving one another means following our Lord's teaching and example. It was central in the life and ministry of Jesus.

**B. It gives evidence that we belong to God, not the evil one (12-15)**

**Lean from the Example of Cain and Able...**

**i. From Cain, we learn what we must avoid: Jealously (12).** The first man to die in Scripture was killed by his brother. You are to be your brother's keeper, not killer.

- Don't be like Cain. Cain is an example of a child of the evil one, with no spiritual life.
- What was Cain's problem? **Wicked jealousy.** Cain was jealous of his brother's righteousness, his brother's offering was accepted while his wasn't, and it turned to hate, which turned to murder.

- Stott: “Jealousy-hatred murder is a natural and terrible sequence.” (cf., James 4:1-2)

**ii. From Abel, we learn what we must expect: Hatred (13).** This may seem a bit out of place, but not really for two reasons:

- i. You may be like Abel. The world may hate you. Just because you are worshipping the living God and serving him.
- ii. In John 16, John puts these two together: love for one another and hatred of the world. He says, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you.” (John 16:20)
  - Some are attracted to love – Acts 2:42-47
  - Others are repelled from it because of *conviction*.

So **don't be surprised** by the world's hatred of you living out your faith – radical love for God and people. “All who live godly lives will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12)

Some professions are inherently dangerous. Soldiers will get shot at occasionally. They are not surprised by it. They don't say, “I can't believe they are shooting at me.” Racecar drivers shouldn't be surprised when they encounter accidents. Baseball players will get hit with the baseball. But there's no crying in baseball! And Christians shouldn't be surprised when the world hates us. They hated Jesus too.

**iii. Test your heart (14-15)**

**Do you have life? (14).** “We know we've passed from death to life.”

- This love for one another is made possible by the new birth.

We need something more than Jesus' example. We need new life. We can't follow Jesus and avoid Cain, apart from the new birth. Christ's death, resurrection, and Spirit enables us to love.

His commandments are not burdensome when his spirit is in you (1john 5:3).

When you become a Christian, you get a new heart, and a new family. “we love the brothers.” **Do you love the brothers?**

*See what kind of love the father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (3:1). So we are. “We” are.*

- Love for one another is the evidence, not the basis (John 5:24-25)  
See also 1 John 5:12

It doesn't mean that we always agree

- But it does mean that in our hearts, we love the people of God.
- Don't you love the church?

It means we don't hate or murder... **Verse 15** – He is not necessarily denying the possibility of repentance and forgiveness for a murderer (Paul persecuted Christians, Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of his murderers), but *he is talking about a present and abiding state of malicious hate* and spirit of murder in the heart of a person, which shows that they are unregenerate. **Do you have hate in your heart?**

A Christian is someone with a new heart and a **new family, and a new commandment** (to love as Jesus has loved). Building on this, notice...

## **#2: Do you see the cross-centered nature of this love? (3:16a)**

**We know what love is because Christ has shown us! (16a)**

Cain's hatred led to murder; Jesus' love led to self-sacrifice.

See also **1 John 4:10-11**, John 15, “no greater love...” (15:13)

Consider the fact that Christ loves you! The world is seeking to be loved. He doesn't love us because we are good. He loves us and makes us good.

When you first start reading the Bible, you might think that the Bible is sort of a **mushy, gushy book for ladies, or a hippy manual** (‘all you need is love,’ or “I wanna know what love is...”), or just weird.

That's because people don't understand love.

### **Defining Love**

Our culture has such a misguided understanding of what love is. It's normally confused with one of four ideas:

- **Tolerance** – truth is sacrificed on the alter of making people happy and for the sake of “self-expression” even if that self-expression is killing them and is contrary to the way God made us to live.

“Speak truth in love.” Don’t replace truthfulness for tolerance.  
But be truthful in love.

- **Sexual** – (eros). If a dating couple say the magic words after a long stint of 2 weeks of **going to the movies and watch Twilight**, then it’s permissible to move to the next base.
- **Diminished** – we just use it to describe a **love for anything, like a donut**. “**he loves me...**” like a donut. **His hot light is on.**
- **Sentimentalism** – “warm fuzzies.” Fall in and out of love, “hallmark love.”

But John will not allow us to miss what love is. He says it clearly in verse 16 – “**By this we know love**, that he laid down his life for us”

For the Christian, we don’t have to guess at what love is. It’s not mystical, philosophical, not just “**being nice**” whatever that means. It’s about the cross of Jesus. That’s where we go to see love:

“God **demonstrated** his love to us, in while we were sinners, he died for us.” (Rom 5:8)

- His death was an **atonement death**: To be our propitiation – justice and mercy meet, “**huper**” (for) denotes **substitution**. He died in place of us, on behalf of us, instead of us.

We don’t know real love apart from Christ and the cross. Throughout the NT the cross is the picture of infinite love:

- Husbands love your wives – not like a donut, sexually, some sentimentalism – like Christ loved... gave himself..
- Eph. 4:32 – forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you... 5:2, walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us
- New Testament love has the cross in view.
- Here it is “**brothers.**” Do you love the brothers?

If I could summarize this love it would be **passion and action, or passion that leads to sacrificial action**. It’s not just a mere sentiment.

- Sympathy is no substitute for action.

**#3: Are You Practically Demonstrating This Love? (16b-18)**

## A. Like Christ, Love by Sacrifice (16b)

“Lay down our lives for the brothers.”

- Who is writing this? John. He’s name is now associated with love.
- But John wasn’t always this guy. He and his brother, James, who would become a martyr in Acts 12, the first of the apostles, were called “sons of thunder.” They wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans and burn them up. You wanted to keep lighters away from these guys.
- But, because of Jesus, John became a sacrificial giver, a lover of people. He matured. He was a late bloomer, but he bloomed.
- What about Peter? He wrote tons about love, “love one another deeply.” Was he always the model of love? No, he cut a guys ear off, always packing. What happened? He was changed.
- Don’t get me wrong, these guys didn’t turn in their man card and become weak guys. No, they grew up. David Gilmore writes, “real men give more than they take ... They are generous even to the point of sacrifice.” Darrin Patrick says, “they are tough and tender.”
- John and Peter eventually grew up and accepted Jesus’ call to sacrificial service, initially it was reluctant, but they eventually became models....
- **John 21:18**

How do you like this for a job ... I’m getting a spanking, how bout this guy? If I’m getting crucified, someone else should! John the beloved, clean shoes, Peter, cutting a guys ear off!

- Job description: “follow me, take care of others, don’t think of yourself, and then be crucified.”
- Not a lot of people lining up for this one at career day – poverty, martyrdom,
- Hospitals, universities, streets – not anything with Caesar, Nero – haircut, salad or a dog pizza
- He had changed their heart and had become their pattern for life.

## B. Like Christ, Love through Compassionate Generosity (17)

Notice the scenario...

- **He has possessions (17a)**

Some of you have possessions; so what are you supposed to do? Become poor? Not necessarily. Some believe that you are only sanctified through poverty, simplicity and suffering; but for some, God chooses to give you blessing, complexity and health – if you find yourself in the second group the goal, according to Scripture is to make sure (1) God is your treasure, not stuff, (2) that you remain humble and (3) that you to become a generous giver (1 Timothy).

Are you sensitive to the needs of others?

- **He knows the need (17b)**

- “sees” not a casual passing glance, but careful look of observation. To see and understand the need.
- This implies that the need is knowable ... sometimes we just don't know. ... You guys okay, “your wife looks really skinny. No, we are fasting – all year.”

“**Brother**” is a shift from plural in verse 16.

You say you love. Who are you loving? Give me a name, a face, a person.

“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.” (G.P. Lewis)

- **Yet, He does nothing (17c)**

- A literal rendering, “he closes his intestines” – he is heartless.
- “conscious indifference”
- Robertson, “It is slamming the door in the face of another's need.” – like James 2
- He doesn't care, he doesn't want to be inconvenienced, and he is faced with this question...

- **Question: How does God's love abide in him? (17d)**

- Acts 2:45; 4:35, Rom. 12:13, Eph. 4:28
- Titus 3:14 - "help cases of urgent need"

**A. Like Christ, Love in deed and sincerity (18)**

He has the heart of a shepherd, “little children” but the voice of a prophet

- **“Let us not love in word or talk”** Love is not just making a good speech.
- He’s not saying don’t be kind or affirming; he’s saying they are worthless if they are not coupled with sincerity and action.
- While Chapman’s love languages are not inspired Scripture, they help us so that love does something:
  1. Time – 2 John 11
  2. Touch – hug, care,
  3. Words - affirmation
  4. Gifts – **“bring me flowers”**
  5. Service – do something for them
- **“But in Deed (ergo) and Truth”**
- Back at my definition of passion and action. You are sincere and you demonstrate your love.
- I think we place too much emphasis on words; words are important, but demonstrating your love is the proof. This southern friend religion culture is full of superficial words. The proof is in the deeds.
- Dude's wife is driving a broken down car and he has a new bass boat but says, “I love my wife.” Does he? Or does he love bass?
- Dude says he loves his wife but has some girlfriends on the side or is constantly looking at porn. Does he love her?

Demonstrate your love... Watch out for guys who manipulate with words but don’t back anything up with deeds.

- Ladies, if a guy asks you out and says, “Let’s go dutch” but says “I love you.” You tell him, no you don’t love me. You tell him you read 1 John, “I’m not dutch.” Apparently the dutch dudes are godless. Pick up the check McFly. And don’t touch her, or we’ll kill you.
- Talk is cheap. Execution shows love. Faith works. Love works.

**What am I saying? Take daily opportunities to serve because you love people. Some create drama; make a big deal. We're not like those who give money and then have an interview. We love Jesus and people.**

*Not all of us will lay down our lives for another in an act of heroism, but what we have is the daily opportunity to share with those in need.*

Fred Craddock, in an address to ministers, caught the practical implications of this reality. "To give my life for Christ appears glorious," he said. "To pour myself out for others ... to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom—I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory."

"We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table—'Here's my life, Lord. I'm giving it all.' But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 worth of quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles instead of saying, 'Get lost.' Go to a ministry meeting. Give a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home. Usually giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it's harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul."

## **2 Questions:**

- **What evidence will you give that you heard this sermon?**
- **Do you possess the Spirit that Enables Brotherly love? "We love because he first loved us!" (4:19)**

**"He that has the son has life..."**

**His commands are not burdensome – it is a joy.**