

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, May 29, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *The Old / New Commandment - 1 John 2:7-11*

“⁷Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. ⁸Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. ⁹He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. ¹⁰He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” -1 John 2:7-11 (NKJV)

BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR 1ST, 2ND, & 3RD JOHN:

(1) AUTHOR = The Apostle John – If you will notice, the letter of 1 John bears no inscription (name, autograph, signature). It doesn't give us a name of an individual in the actual letter itself. For that reason 1 John is often called an “anonymous letter,” but 2 and 3 John do carry an inscription. They are written by someone called “the Elder,” a reference to one of Jesus' closest disciples/apostles who was a part of Jesus inner circle, John. The moniker “Elder” does indicate that John is advanced in years when these letter were written. The language and style of all three letters are identical to each other as well as to John's Gospel, so the traditional view and the most commonly held view is that all three were written by the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20-24). There is no reason to doubt this and early church leaders titled these three little book by John's name.

John actually wrote 5 books in the New Testament... not just these three.

5 Books Written by the Beloved Disciple:

1. The Gospel of John

2. First John
3. Second John
4. Third John
5. The Book of the Revelation

And this I think is significant... all of his books were written later in life and after all the other books in the Bible were recorded.

Here are some facts we know about John:

- **He was the son of Zebedee and Salome (Mt. 4:21; 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40-41)**
- **He and his brother James were fishermen with their father (Mk. 1:19-20)**
- **He and James were called Boanerges or Sons of thunder by Christ because of their fiery behavior at times (Mk. 3:17; cp. Lk. 9:53-54)**
- **He was one of the 3 most intimate disciples of the Lord (Mt. 17:1ff; 26:37)**
- **He was a close associate of Simon Peter... the first ones to arrive at the tomb (Jn. 20:2-8), they suffered imprisonment together after healing a lame man (Acts 3 & 4), and they traveled together to Samaria after the gospel was preached (Acts 8:14-17) not to mention that they were the disciples closest to Jesus**
- **He was one of the pillars (prime leaders) of the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9)**
- **From external and extra-biblical sources (history/tradition), like Polycarp, Papias (*pappy-us*), and Justin Martyr (early church fathers) we are told the following about John from his writings – These early church fathers often quoted John and used his writings**
- **Polycarp and Papias were identified as pupils of John - They have writings dated as early as the 2nd century**
- **John was eventually banished to the isle of Patmos by the Roman emperor Domitian, from where he received the visions and wrote The Revelation (cp. Rev. 1:9)**
- **He returned to Ephesus to live out the rest of his life, from where he wrote these three epistles as well as the gospel that bears his name - Archeological remains bear his name in ruins of churches and shrines**
- **John outlived all the other apostles**
- **The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was written by John probably close to the same time he wrote these small epistles which bear his name.**
- **Remember the book of the Revelation was written about the vision that John saw while banished to the Greek island of Patmos on the Aegean sea.**
- **Tradition says that this was after John had been sentenced to death by martyrdom.**
- **We know little about John's later life and death from the Bible**
- **The most insightful bit of information comes from John 21 when the risen Christ was talking to Peter about Peter's death - After Jesus told Peter that he would not live long Peter asked about John's death. Jesus replied that if John lived until Christ's return, that was not Peter's concern. This was not a promise that John would live until the Lord**

returned, but it does seem to indicate that the Lord knew John would live a long time (John 21:19-23)

- **Tradition holds that John was sentenced to death in a boiling vat of oil, yet he emerged unharmed from the experience**
- **Again tradition tells us that John lived into old age perhaps dying sometime after AD 98... He is thought to have died in Ephesus – But in fact the mystery and unknowns concerning John’s death and what happened to him are not known and are varied...**

God Questions? How Did the Apostle John Die?

We know that the apostle John was exiled for his faith late in life (Revelation 1:9). The Bible does not give us details on how the apostle John died, but tradition gives us a few theories.

The most plausible theory of John’s death states that John was arrested in Ephesus and faced martyrdom when his enemies threw him in a huge basin of boiling oil. However, according to the tradition, John was miraculously delivered from death. The authorities then sentenced John to slave labor in the mines of Patmos. On this island in the southern part of the Aegean Sea, John had a vision of Jesus Christ and wrote the prophetic book of Revelation. The apostle John was later freed, possibly due to old age, and he returned to Ephesus, in what is now Turkey. He died as an old man sometime after AD 98, the only apostle to die peacefully.

Another theory concerning John’s death is associated with a second-century bishop named Papias of Hierapolis. According to one commentary on Papias’s writings, John was killed by a group of Jewish men. However, many historians believe Papias was misquoted or misread and doubt the credibility of this theory.

There is also a legend that says John did not die but rather ascended straight to heaven like Enoch and Elijah. There is no biblical evidence to lend validity to this story.

Ultimately, it is not essential to know how the apostle John died. What is important is the fact that he was not ashamed of Christ (see Luke 9:26) and was willing to die for his faith. A man will not die for something he knows to be a lie. John knew the truth that Jesus had been resurrected, and he was willing to die rather than to renounce his faith in his Savior.

(2) DATE = A.D. 90-95 - As with most books in the Bible, we cannot know for certain when and from where these epistles were penned. As to a date, it is commonly believed to have been written close to the end of the 1st century, with a fairly wide possible time frame... somewhere between 90-95 A.D. Again, we don’t know the exact time or order of the books having been written, but here are some possible dates for John’s writings...

Dates for John’s Biblical Writings:

- 1. The Gospel of John = AD 80 to 98**
- 2. First, Second and Third John = AD 90 to 95**
- 3. The Book of the Revelation = AD 94 to 98**

Of course we know God inspired the Bible and that it was written with His leading, but this may explain why the book of John seems so applicable to the readers of today. **Think of this... John had more time to think about what questions were raised in the 50 or more years after the resurrection of Christ. He knew what doubts had been raised and how to answer the questions before we knew to ask them.**

(3) PLACE OF WRITING = Ephesus – Again, as with most books in the Bible, we cannot know with certainty when and from where these small letters of John were written. Some guesses are better than others, but are still just that guesses. It is believed by most Biblical scholars that John wrote these letters from Ephesus, the place believed to be where he died. It is usually accepted that John wrote them late in his life. Supporters of this point to 2 John 1 and 3 John 1. In both verses, the author calls himself “the elder.” In the original text, there is a definite article before “elder.” Thus, the reference is probably to an older man rather than to one who serves as an overseer in a local church. Also, 1 John 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 5:21; and 3 John 4 all reference John’s readers as his “little children.” Such a fatherly concern points to John as an older man.

(4) RECIPIENTS = 3 different audiences - The Epistles of John were written to various audiences. They were all written after John was an old man living in Ephesus.

3 Recipients of John’s Letter:

1. **Letter 1 = The Ephesian church (and/or surrounding churches)** - The first epistle was not addressed to anyone in particular, but was written more as a sermon
2. **Letter 2 = Elect lady** - The second was written to an unnamed “elect lady.”
3. **Letter 3 = Gaius** - The third to a man name Gaius. There are three men who bear that name to whom the letter could have been written. There was a Gaius in Macedonia (Acts 19: 29), Corinth (Rom. 16:23), and Derbe (Acts 20:4).

(5) PURPOSE = Multiple purposes - In terms of a positive stated purpose, John actually gives us reasons why he wrote these epistles:

3 Stated Positive Purposes for These Letters:

1. **That your (our) joy may be made complete = 1 John 1:4**
2. **That you may not sin = 1 John 2:1**
3. **That you may know that you have eternal life = 1 John 5:13**

Like the gospel of John, the 3 letters of John were written to supply evidence essential for the building of credible faith.

It also seems evident that John had a purpose to write that was negative in nature.

Three Stated Negative Purposes for These Letters:

1. **He addresses false doctrines that threatened the faith of the early saints = 1 John 2:26).**
2. **There were some who even went out from among the believers = 1 John 2:19 (see also Acts 20:30)**
3. **Of particular concern during these days was the threat of Gnosticism-**
 - The word “Gnosticism” comes from gnosis, which meant “knowledge.”
 - It was “the philosophical result of the blending of the cosmology (*Cosmology deals with the world as the totality of space, time and all phenomena. Historically, it has had quite a broad scope, and in many cases was found in religion*) of Greek thought with the theology of oriental religions, esp. Judaism” (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 3, p. 648).
 - Gnostics believed they had superior knowledge, and such knowledge was limited only to their select group.
 - According to them, salvation came from knowing theories rather than faith in a Savior.
 - Such a claim obviously puts them at odds with the Lord’s apostles who were promised to be ‘guided into all truth’ (Jn. 16:13).
 - It also contradicts the promise made to those who, upon reading inspired documents, would have apostolic insight into previously hidden mysteries (Eph. 3:3-5).
 - To meet such a threat, the error of gnosticism had to be exposed. Gnostics believed that all matter was evil, and the spirit of man was good.
 - They believed the human body and the spirit within had no effective contact with each other.
 - A redeemed soul inside a sinful body was not affected by immoral behavior.
 - Thus, a person could engage in all sorts of wickedness and it would not endanger the soul.
 - This “theory” puts them in conflict with the Incarnation, or God dwelling in bodily form (cp. Phil. 2:7; Col. 2:9; Jn. 1:14).
 - In terms of everyday application of such a doctrine, usually one of two extremes were practiced: (1) man should abstain from everything that would satisfy the sinful flesh (2) since the soul could not be affected by sinful behavior, man was at liberty to do anything that would satisfy the flesh
 - Generally, gnosticism fell into 2 categories:

2 Categories of Gnosticism:

- (1) **Docetic Gnosticism** – Docetic gnostics (from dokein, ‘to seem’) did not believe that Christ came in bodily form. He only seemed to have been physical; it was “imagined.” If He did come, He was not perfect while in the flesh (cp. 1 Jn. 4:1-3).
- (2) **Cerinthian Gnosticism** - Cerinthian gnostics (named after Cerinthus, an Ephesian gnostic) attempted to make a distinction between the man Jesus and

the Christ. They taught that Christ descended upon Jesus at His baptism, and ascended shortly before His crucifixion. Thus it was not Christ who suffered, died, and rose again but Jesus (cp. 1 Jn. 5:6). In order to combat these heresies, John provides proof of the reality of the Lord's fleshly body. He offered testimony using 3 of his 5 human senses (1 Jn. 1:1). Also, to refute the notion that sinful activity can be indulged in without consequences, John pointed out the following: (1) only those who are pure have an eternal hope (1 Jn. 3:3) (2) only those who do righteousness are righteous (1 Jn. 3:7) (3) those who habitually practice sin are of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8)



I think that we all chuckle at the Peanuts cartoon strip because so often we see the truth about ourselves there. That is especially so when Linus protests, **"I love mankind; it's people I can't stand!"** Love in the abstract is a cinch. It's loving those irritating people that I rub shoulders with that is not easy.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

1. *How can a person who grew up in an abusive home learn to love others?*
2. *What is the relationship between loving someone and liking him? Are we obligated to like others?*
3. *Why is the modern psychological advice, "Learn to love yourself," completely misguided? What about someone with "low self-esteem" or someone who is "co-dependent"?*
4. *How would you advise a couple who claimed that they no longer loved each other? Where do they begin?*

In **1 John 2:3-6** (where we were last week), the apostle gives a test by which you can know that you truly know Jesus Christ, namely, **if you walk in obedience to His word**. In 1 John 2:6, he states, **"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."** How did Jesus walk? Let's look at Paul's words in Ephesians 5 (**READ: Ephesians 5:1-16**)

¹Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ²And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling

aroma.³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. ¹⁴ Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." ¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly (cautiously, watchfully, vigilantly, wisely), not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil." -Ephesians 5:1-16 (NKJV)

Notice Paul's instruction to Christian is to imitate God/Jesus in their walk... in other words as John said it (in 1 John 2:6) "walk just as He (Jesus) walked." But also notice that Paul goes a step further and describes what that walk looks like. ***What do you see in that passage (Ephesians 5:1-15) that describes what that "like Jesus" walk ought to look like?***

Paul's Description of What Walking Like Jesus Looks Like:

- (1) Walk in love (Ephesians 5:2) –
- (2) Walk in light (Ephesians 5:8) –
- (3) Walk in wisdom (Ephesians 5:15) -

Here it is again... in 1 John 2:6, he states, "⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." Then, in verses 7-11, John goes on to apply this test of obedience more specifically to the area of love. If Jesus' life and especially His death epitomized love, then those who claim to follow Him are obligated to live in love.

In the Upper Room, on the night He was betrayed, Jesus demonstrated His great love for the disciples by taking a towel and a basin of water and washing the disciples' feet. After that unforgettable object lesson, He drove the point home in John 13:14-15, "¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

What do you think Jesus talking about? What example was He giving them and what does that mean?

He was not instituting a ceremonial foot-washing service, where everyone comes with clean feet to be washed! He was saying something much more difficult to practice, that we who follow Jesus must set aside our rights and serve one another out of love.

In that same chapter in John 13:34-35, Jesus said, *“³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

Obviously, those words of Jesus were behind John’s words about the old, new commandment. It may be that the heretics against whom John was writing claimed to have some “new” truths. Using an obvious play on words, John counters them by saying that we don’t need new truth, but rather the old truth that his readers learned early in their Christian experience. On the other hand, if you want “new” truth, John says that the old commandment is the new commandment, which Jesus gave to us. In short,

Loving one another is an essential mark of a true Christian.

2 Ways Love May Be Defined Today:

- (1) **Culturally** – *How is “love” defined culturally?*
- (2) **Biblically** – *How is “love” defined biblically?*

7 Worldly (Cultural) Love Vs Godly (Biblical) Love Differences:

Take your time to explore below the 7 differences between worldly love and godly love which will remind you that real love only comes from God.

(1) **Different Sources Of Love** - One of the major differences you will notice between worldly or cultural love and godly or biblical love is the sources they come from.

- Cultural/Worldly love stems from human emotions and desires, often driven by self-gratification.
- Biblical/Godly love finds its origin in the very nature of God Himself. As **1 John 4:8** tells us, *“⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”*

It is an outpouring of the divine love that flows from our Heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. As we see from the above Bible verse, godly biblical love always comes from God as God is that very definition of love.

On the contrary, worldly love... the cultural love we see in the world today comes from the world and is based on self. You need to understand that you can’t show divine love to others on your own without God in your life. This is because we are naturally selfish and self-centered creatures due to our fallen nature. As sinful humans, we view and think love is based on feelings and what we can get from others which isn’t the case with the

Christian love that our Lord Jesus Christ who is love Himself commands us to show to others in John 13:34, *“³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”*

(2) Difference Between Unconditional Vs Conditional Love - The second major difference between worldly human love and godly love is...

- Cultural or worldly love is often conditional, relying on external factors such as attractiveness, what we can get from the other person, wealth, or social status. It often fades when circumstances change or expectations are unmet.
- Biblical or godly love is unwavering and unconditional. Romans 5:8 (our but God verse from last Sunday, *“⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*) reminds us that God demonstrates his own love for us while we were still sinners and that Christ died for us even when we deserved eternal death in hell.

Tell me of any selfish sinful human being who can love you like that. The answer to that question is none as we are inherently selfish and self-centered creatures only willing to love someone if we are benefiting from that person in some way.

God’s love for us remains steadfast and without any strings attached unlike worldly love, irrespective of our flaws or failures. It doesn’t say that I will only love you if you are like this or if you do x, y, and z for me.

(3) Difference Between Self-less-ness Vs Self-Centeredness – Another vital difference that exists between godly biblical love and cultural worldly love is...

- Biblical or godly love is pure and selfless while the latter is notoriously selfish and self-centered. One is all about selflessly serving others
- Cultural or worldly love is about serving self.

It’s why we are told in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, *“⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.”* God’s agape love is sacrificial and doesn’t seek its self-interests which is often the case with human love that is all about me.

Cultural love found in the world today tends to be self-centered, seeking personal gain, self-gratification, or pleasure at the expense of another person.

In contrast, godly love is marked by self-less-ness and sacrificial giving. Jesus Christ exemplified this love when He willingly laid down His life for humanity by dying for our sins knowing we might never love Him back.

If many understood this, all these relationship problems we have now in the world wouldn't exist. As He said in **John 15:13**, "*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*" Implying, godly divine love always seeks to serve others selflessly by laying down one's life for another.

(4) Difference Between Temporary Vs Eternal - The other difference we see between godly biblical love and the love found in this world is...

- Worldly and cultural love is often fleeting, tied to the passing pleasures of this world (1 John 2:16, "*For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.*"). It's also driven by lust, pride, infatuation, fame, or momentary desires.
- Godly biblical love is eternal and has an everlasting impact on one's life as it leads to a deeper, meaningful connection and relationship with God and others.

It's why we are told in Psalms 136:1-9 in the Old Testament that God's love endures forever and will be so for all eternity. Implying that the love God has for us will never end as it's eternal since the beginning of time just as He's eternal without end. This is why you must not seek worldly love that is fleeting and temporal as it will not last forever. Instead, always seek God's love that has no end as it's the only love that can meet the deepest needs of your soul. The cultural and worldly love of today, due to its fleeting and temporal nature, vainly seeks from the world what it cannot find and the fulfillment of the heart deepest desires that will never be satisfied.

(5) Difference Between Love For All Vs Selective Love –

- Godly and biblical love is all-encompassing and extends to all, including sinners. It reaches out to all the lost, broken, and marginalized, embracing them with grace and forgiveness without any discrimination.
- Worldly love... cultural love, however, is often selective, directed only towards those who meet certain criteria or benefit us in some way.

It's why Jesus Christ says in Matthew 9:13 He didn't come for the righteous but to save sinners. From the above statement of Christ Jesus, we see that His love doesn't

discriminate. Even if we are all naturally born sinners unworthy of His love by default, He still loves us, regardless. It's why He died a shameful death on the cross for your sins and my sins so that we can be saved from hell.

On the contrary, worldly love due to its conditional and selfish nature, can't do what Christ did. A person with worldly love only selectively loves a person based on merit and what that person can benefit them.

Conversely, a person with godly love loves everyone including sinners whether they deserve it or not as true love is all about grace.

(6) Difference Between Rejoicing in Righteousness Vs Supporting Sin - Also, we see that...

- Biblical and godly love unlike worldly love rejoices in the truth and righteousness as we see in 1 Corinthians 13:6, "*6 (Love) does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.*" And this kind of love doesn't support sin.
- Worldly love supports sin or doing evil things and is all about fulfilling evil lustful desires of the flesh. This explains why there is a lot of moral perversion nowadays in society all in the name of false and perverted love.

Sadly, many blindfolded by sin think loving someone means condoning their sinful behavior. Just look how homosexuality, lesbianism, and sexual immorality are being promoted in society even in the church sadly all in the name of love.

Sadly, many so-called fake Christians see nothing wrong with this in the name of love and tolerance.

However, as a true believer who's separated from this evil world, you need to understand that godly Christian love doesn't condone sin or sinful behaviors of people but rather stands fast for the truth of God's Word in love. Implying if real godly love that is pure and righteous is in you and your Christian life, certainly you will not support wrong and evil things. Nor will you condone the sinful behaviors of others be it your friends.

(7) Difference Between Christ-Based Vs Infatuation Based Love - Last but not least...

- Godly biblical love isn't lust or infatuation-based - Implying that the unconditional love that comes from God isn't based on the external beauty of a person but based on commitment. Instead, the divine love of God is deep and is based on the selfless love

Christ showed us which He also wants us to have for others, especially in our marriage relationships.

- Cultural or worldly love is all about lust and infatuation - Just look at the way these so-called worldly romantic movies wrongly portray what real love is all about. It's why many relationships today don't last as most people have the wrong impression of what real love is all about. All you see in these romantic movies is infatuation and people fulfilling the lusts of the flesh considering how immoral most of these so-called romantic movies are (1 John 2:16,17).

You need to understand that true love that's from God is not about kissing each other as worldly romantic movies want you to believe. Instead, it's based on Christ and is all about building deep and meaningful relationships with God and others.

Understanding the distinctions between biblical love and cultural love is essential for all genuine believers seeking to live a Christ-centered life that is a blessing to others. The Scriptures reveal that godly love originates from the heart of our Heavenly Father demonstrated by the selfless sacrifice of Jesus Christ by dying for our sins. May we strive to embrace and reflect this agape love in our daily lives so that we become vessels of God's truth and unconditional love to a world in desperate need of His redeeming grace.

Having said all that, I must quickly add that that we *must* define "love" biblically, not culturally. Culturally, if you mention the word "love," people think of "niceness." They picture a loving person as always being nice and sweet towards everyone. He never confronts sin or error. He never gets angry about evil or says anything that might upset someone.

But if you are at all familiar with the four gospels, you will immediately see that by this cultural definition, Jesus was not a loving man!

- Jesus *loved* the Jewish religious leaders when He said to them, "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*" (Matt. 23:15).
- He *loved* Peter when He said to him, "*Get behind Me, Satan*" (Matt. 16:23).
- He *loved* the multitude when He said to them, "*You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?*" (Matt. 17:17).
- The apostle Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit, whose first fruit is love, when he said to Elymas, "*You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?*" Then, he struck him blind (see Acts 13:9-11).

I'm not saying that we should go around blasting people, while claiming that we're loving them! I'm only pointing out that our definition of love, in a practical sense, must encompass all that the Bible says about love, not what our worldly culture says. John makes two points in our text:

2 Points John Makes in 1 John 2:7-11 Concerning Love:

- (1) To love one another is to obey our Lord's commandment (1 John 2:7-8)**
- (2) To love is inseparable from the light, just as hatred is inseparable from the darkness (1 John 2:9-11)**

TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER IS TO OBEY OUR LORD'S COMMANDMENT (1 John 2:7-8)

Notice verse 7-8 or our passages...

"⁷Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard ^[b]from the beginning. ⁸Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining." -1 John 2:7-8 (NKJV)

In these two verses, John makes four points:

4 Key Points in John's Words: (in 1 John 2:7-8)

- 1. Jesus' command to love one another is both old and new -** John never specifically identifies the old, new commandment in these verses, and he only mentions love once in this entire section in verse 10. **But his reference to the new commandment makes it obvious that he is referring to Jesus' command to love one another.** This commandment was old in two senses.

2 Senses in Which the Commandment to "Love One Another" is Old:

- [1] It was old in that Moses taught it in the Law – Leviticus 19:18 said it, **"... you shall love your neighbor as yourself."** Jesus identified this as the second greatest commandment, after the command to love God with all your being in Matthew 22:37-40. So in that sense, this command had been with God's people for 1,400 years.**
- [2] (Mainly) It was an old commandment in that these believers had heard it from the very earliest days of their Christian experience –** Notice that verse 7 of our passage says, **"⁷Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning."** John uses the phrase, "from the beginning," in the same way throughout his letters... like the word **"know"** the phrase

“you heard from the beginning” is a favorite... repeated in 1 John 3:11, “¹¹ For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” And again in 2 John 5, “⁵ And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.”

But, John says (2:8), the commandment is also new, in that Jesus had issued it as the new commandment (John 13:34). **John Stott** (*The Epistles of John* [Eerdmans], p. 93) suggests four ways that this old commandment became new when Jesus issued it.

4 Ways in Which the Commandment to “Love One Another” is New:

- [1] **The commandment was new in its emphasis** - In that Jesus brought it together with the command to love God as the summation of the entire Law.
- [2] **The commandment was new in its quality** - In that His own self-sacrifice on the cross became the standard.
- [3] **The commandment was new in its extent** - In that in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus extended the definition of neighbor to go beyond race or religion. Anyone in need who crosses our path is our neighbor. He said that we should love even our enemies.
- [4] **The commandment was new in the disciples’ continuing apprehension of it** - The love of Jesus on the cross is inexhaustible. We can never plumb its depths. And so as we grow in our understanding of His great love, we will grow in our apprehension of how we must love one another. So Jesus’ command is both old and new.

2. **From the beginning of your Christian walk, you should learn how to establish and maintain loving relationships** - John tells his readers that they have had this commandment “*from the beginning,*” and then identifies it as “*the word which you have heard*” (in verse 7). It was part and parcel with the gospel that they had believed at the outset of their Christian experience.

When we hear and respond to the good news that Jesus Christ died for sinners, at that point the love of God is “*poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (Rom. 5:5).

The first fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22).

As I mentioned, the entire Bible may be summed up by the two great commandments, to love God and to love one another. So learning how to establish and maintain loving relationships is not “graduate level” Christianity. It is basic, beginning Christianity.

Many have come into the faith from backgrounds where you did not experience love. Your parents perhaps abused you verbally or physically. Maybe you were in a series of

abusive relationships with the opposite sex. You've had no models of how to love other people. It is urgent, once you trust in Christ as your Savior, to learn from God's Word and from more mature believers how to love others in a practical, daily manner.

- You will need to unlearn many bad ways of relating to others that you brought with you from the past.
- You will need to relearn how to think and speak and act in loving ways, especially toward those who wrong you.
- If you do not learn to love others, you will fester with anger and bitterness, and your relationship with Christ will suffer.
- It all begins with *how you think* about others.
- Instead of thinking first about yourself, your feelings, your rights, and your needs, you must learn to think first about others.
- How can I show this difficult person the love of Jesus Christ? How can I serve this person in love?
- Rather than thinking angry thoughts about how he wronged you and how you'll get even, you begin to think about how Jesus wants you to think about the one who mistreated you.

You begin to pray for this person, that he would come to know Jesus.

You look for opportunities to return good instead of evil.

Recommended Helps:

- I recommend that you write out Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 on a card and read it over several times each morning, until you have in your mind how a loving person acts.
- Do the same with 1 Peter 3:8-12.
- Then, love extends to *your speech*. You put off abusive speech that tears down the other person, and you put on speech that builds him up (Gal. 5:15; Eph. 4:29, 31-32; Col. 3:8).
- You stop lying or stretching the truth to your own advantage and begin speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15, 25).
- You cease from gossip and slander (2 Cor. 12:20).
- Then, in *your behavior* you begin to practice loving deeds (Rom. 12:9-13; Eph. 5:2).
- You look for opportunities to serve others, beginning in your home.
- You become "zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14).

Again, this is not advanced, graduate level Christianity. This is freshman Christianity 101. But, maybe you're thinking, "I don't have the strength to do what you're saying."

3. **Your new relationship with Jesus Christ is central to practicing biblical love towards others** – Notice John says in verse 8 that this old, new commandment **"is true in Him and in you."**

- It is *true in Him* because the Lord Jesus is the greatest example of love in the history of the world.
- left the splendor and perfect holiness of heaven, where He enjoyed unbroken fellowship with the Father.
- He came to this broken and sin-stained world, not as the conquering King, but as a lowly servant.
- He was obedient to death on the cross at the hands of sinful men that He could have obliterated, if He had given the command.
- He did it all to save sinners who deserved His wrath.
- This new commandment is supremely true in Him.

But John also says that it is *true in you*. If you ask, “How so?” the answer is, “Because you are now in Him.”

- It is true in Him fundamentally and true in you derivatively because of your new relationship with Him.
- Paul often describes our new relationship as being *“in Christ.”*
- John uses the term, *“abiding”* in Him.
- The glorious truth of the New Testament is that we are joint-heirs with Christ of all His riches (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:19-20; 2:6)!

★ So if you are lacking in love for a difficult person, pray, “Lord, You know that I am empty and unable to love this person. But, I am in You and You do not lack love, even for the unlovely. Please love this person through me!”

Understanding your new relationship with Jesus Christ is central to practicing biblical love.

4. Growing in love for others is a lifelong process - John adds in verse 8 of our passage (1 John 2:8), “... because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.”

- Primarily, John is referring to the dawning of the gospel through Jesus Christ (see Luke 1:78-79; John 1:9).
- His coming inaugurated a new era.
- But in a secondary sense, what John says here applies to every person who has trusted in Christ.
- Paul put it like this in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” (See also, Col. 1:12, 13.)
- Or, as Peter put it this way in 1 Peter 2:9, God saved us “so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

So becoming a Christian is a radical change from darkness to light, where God opens your blind eyes to see something of the glory of Jesus Christ. Yet at the same time, there is a process involved that takes time.

- The darkness does not dissipate instantly, but rather it is gradually dispelled as the true Light of Jesus Christ and God's word shines more and more into your heart.
- When it comes to the practicalities of learning to live in love, it is a lifelong process.
- You never arrive at the place where you can say, "I love everyone perfectly now! Let's move on!"
- Paul put it this way in 1 Thessalonians. 4:9-10, "*Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, ...*"
- Or, as he prayed for the Philippians in Philippians 1:9, "*that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.*"

So, don't be like the husband who grudgingly accompanied his wife to the marriage counselor. She complained to the counselor that he never told her that he loved her. The counselor asked, "Is this true?" The man gruffly responded, "I told her that 25 years ago when we got married, and it hasn't changed!"

You've got to work at growing in love on a daily basis for the rest of your life. To love one another is to obey our Lord's commandment.

LOVE IS INSEPARABLE FROM THE LIGHT, JUST AS HATRED IS INSEPARABLE FROM THE DARKNESS (1 John 2:9-11)

Look at the last part of our passage in 1 John 2:9-11, "*⁹He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. ¹⁰He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*" -1 John 2:9-11

The phrase, "*He one who says,*" that begins vs. 9, tips us off that John again has the heretics in mind. They claimed to be enlightened, and yet, apparently, they were arrogant and self-centered. They did not love others in a sacrificial way. They were using people to build a following for themselves, rather than building people to follow Christ.

So John gets out his black and white paint again, and without mixing them into shades of gray, he shows that these false teachers were not true believers. They do not love; they hate. They are not in the light; they are in the darkness until now (1 John 2:9).

But we should not only use John's words to identify false teachers. We should also apply them honestly to our own lives. Sadly, there are many that profess to know Christ, but in their marriages and towards their children they do not practice biblical love.

➔ Many evangelical churches are torn apart by conflict because certain powerful members did not get their own way. Rather than acting in love, they viciously attack those who don't agree with them. So, John shows that love is inseparable from the light, just as hatred invariably is bound up with darkness. He does not allow for any middle ground, where you can be sort of loving, but sort of cantankerous, too! He makes three points:

3 Points Concerning Love Being Inseparable from Light:

(1) **Your profession of being in the light is exposed as false if you hate your brother** – Notice verse 9, “⁹He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.”

You may be thinking, “Hate is a pretty strong word! While I may not *love* that difficult person, I wouldn't say that I *hate* him.” But John doesn't let us go there! You either love the other person, which requires sacrificing yourself for that person's highest good, as Jesus did for us on the cross (John 13:34)—or, you hate him.

Writing to a Gentile church situation, Paul contrasts the new way in Christ with the old life before he met Christ Titus 3:1-3, “¹Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. ³For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.”

He goes on to talk of how God's kindness and love transformed us through salvation. The point is, no matter how pagan or unloving your background, if you continue in a lifestyle of hate rather than a lifestyle of love, your profession of faith is suspect.

(2) **If you love your brother, you abide in the light and have no cause for stumbling in you** – Notice verse 10, “¹⁰He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.”

Whether “light” should be capitalized (NASB) to represent Christ or whether it refers to the truth of God's Word, I don't know. It doesn't matter in that if you abide in Jesus Christ, you also abide in His Word, which sheds His light into your heart. To abide in the light means to live with your life exposed and open to God's Word.

- You allow the Word to shine into the dark recesses of your mind, exposing and rooting out what is evil
- John says that loving your brother is inseparable from abiding in the light.

- And if you love your brother and abide in the light, “there is no cause for stumbling” in you.
- This may mean that you do not cause others to stumble in their walk with God because, out of love for them, you only say and do that which builds them in Christ.
- Or, it may mean that the person who walks in the light will not stumble himself, because the light illumines his path (John 11:9-10).
- In both senses, walking in love preserves you from sin. Failure to love often leads you into other sins.
- For example, lust and sexual immorality are serious sins, but both are rooted in a lack of love for others. To lust after a woman is to desire to use her to gratify your desires. It is a failure of love.
- Or, take the sins of greed, stealing, and murder. They all stem from a failure to love others. Invariably, those who commit these sins love themselves quite well! None of us need to work on loving ourselves, as the “Christian” psychologists repeatedly emphasize.
- The task is, to love others as we all in fact *do* love ourselves!

(3) If you hate your brother, you are still in the darkness, you walk in the darkness, and you don't know where you're going because you're spiritually blind – Look at **verse 11 in our passage, *“¹¹But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”***

I'm not making up these points. I'm merely summarizing each of these verses...

- The plain meaning of verse 11 is that if you live for yourself with no regard for others, no self-sacrifice or willingness to be inconvenienced to meet others' needs, then you are not saved.
- John is not talking about occasional lapses into selfishness. We all fail in that at times.
- Rather, he's talking about a lifestyle (“walks”).
- The person who lives for himself and is indifferent towards others (which is what hatred means) *“does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes”* (v.11). He is spiritually blind, groping through life without the light of God's Word to guide him in God's ways.
- Perhaps you have known those who profess to know Christ, but their relationships are marked by anger, abusive speech, bitterness, and self-centeredness. Invariably, they don't have a clue as to why they keep experiencing broken relationships.
- While you and I do not know their hearts (only God does), their lives do not give evidence that they have experienced the love of God in Jesus Christ.
- Rather, they seem to be in spiritual darkness, blindly colliding from one broken relationship to the next.
- They do not practice biblical love, which is an essential mark of every true Christian.

CONCLUSION

Some Concluding Reminders:

- (1) Remember none of us loves perfectly** - When we fail, we need to repent and ask forgiveness of the one we wronged. It is a lifelong process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. But those who have met Him at the cross will be growing in love for others.
- (2) Remember that love for others is a commandment, not a warm, gushy feeling** - That should give you hope, because God's commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3) and God's Spirit gives us the grace and power to obey His commands, which are for our good. *Biblical love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.* You can obey the commandment to love others!
- (3) Remember the Bible is clear... we are to get to work obeying God commandment to love others** - So if you're thinking, "But I don't love my mate any more," or, "I just don't like that difficult person," the Bible is clear... get to work obeying God's commandment to love him or her. It's not optional for the follower of Christ. It's essential!