

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 14, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *Love, Hate and Christians* *1 John 3:11-18*

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

- (1) **AUTHOR = The Apostle John** – 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...
- (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.
- (3) **PLACE OF WRITING = Ephesus** – 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.
- (4) **RECIPIENTS = Different audiences** - The Epistles of John were written to various audiences. They were all written after John was an old man living in Ephesus.
- (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
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The disciple John... the beloved disciple, is recognized fondly among Bible readers as the “apostle of love”... and for good reason.

5 Quick “Love” Facts from John, The Apostle of Love:

- (1) In the Gospel of John, the word "love" is used 39 times**
- (2) In 1 John, the word "love" is used 50 times across five short chapters**
- (3) In 15 verses of 1 John, the word "love" (or loved, loves, and loving) is used 27 times, which is roughly 1.8 times per verse.**
- (4) In addition, the word "love" appears 13 times in other verb forms**
- (5) John wrote the word “truth” in his books, some 45 times total, but he wrote the word “love” more than 90 times, more than twice as many times.**

We’ve already seen this to some extent in our study of 1 John. He has mentioned “love” at least 5 times in previous verses...

- 1 John 2:5 – *“But whoever keeps His words, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”* **What is John telling us about love in this verse?**
- 1 John 2:10 – *“He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.”* **What point is John making about love in this verse?**
- 1 John 2:15 – *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him.”* **What is John saying about love in this verse?**
- 1 John 3:1 – *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed (lavished) on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”* **What is John telling us about love in this verse?**
- 1 John 3:10 – *“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”* **And what about this verse, what is John saying about love here?**

And now in our passage in **John 3:11-18**, in ever more detail, John speaks of love and hate...

“¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. ¹³Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” -1 John 3:11-18 (NKJV)

Notice “love” is mentioned 6 times and “hate” twice in those few verses... the key words to John’s thoughts here. This is indeed an interesting and powerful passage... a deep and probing passage.

I want to share a couple of quotes with you this evening. They are fairly long quotes from Dr. John Piper, but I want you to pay attention and listen closely to what he says here and then I want us to discuss what he is saying for a minute.

SOME QUOTES WORTH QUOTING:

- “We cannot claim to truly love someone while being indifferent toward what destroys them. If we love our enemies, then we must hate the evil of our enemies that makes them so. That evil — the evil for which they are culpable and liable for eternal punishment — is therefore at odds with love’s interest in their eternal good.” – Dr. John Piper
 - *What are your initial thoughts about what Dr. Piper is saying? Do you agree or disagree? Why?*
 - *What do you think he means when he says, “We cannot claim to truly love someone while being indifferent toward what destroys them...”? What is he talking about do you think? Can you cite an example?*
 - *What do you think he means by “hate(ing) the evil of our enemies that makes them so...” and how does this relate to loving out enemies?*
- “Jesus said to love our enemies...we should be clear that he didn’t mean hollow good will, or some bland benevolence, or a flakey niceness that hopes our enemies stop being so cruel. When Jesus says to love our enemies, he means that we love them with a lay-your-life-down type of love — the type that comes from the heart and desires the other’s good, and sacrifices for it, when no one else but God is watching. And it’s the type of love that includes hate. In fact, if the love is real, it must include hate. On one hand, righteous hatred is expected because evil acts are morally repugnant and offensive to God (Psalm 97:10). Evil belittles God’s holiness and evidences that his name is not hallowed. We hate evil because it is wrong. But on the other hand, if this hatred is part of loving our enemies, we must hate the evil of our enemies because of what the evil means for *them*.” -Dr. John Piper
 - *What are your initial thoughts about what Dr. Piper is saying? Do you agree or disagree? Why?*
 - *What do you think he means by “bland benevolence” “flakey niceness” kind of love? What is he talking about? How do sometimes who this?*
 - *What do you think about his statement that “if love is real, it must include hate?” What do you think he means? Do you agree or disagree?*

Let’s hear Jesus words that are being referred to here in Matthew 5:43-4...

Matthew 5:43-48, “⁴³ ‘You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.’”

What do you think these verses have to do with Dr. John Pipers statements? How do they relate?

How do these verses relate to what John writes in 1 John 3:11-18... our passage?

Jack Hyles said, “You will never really love until you love someone who hates you.”

Application Questions

1. Practically, how would you counsel a Christian to deal with deep-seated bitterness, anger, or hatred?
2. Often we are blind to our selfishness. How can we grow to see it so that we can deal with it in a godly manner?
3. Is there a difference between loving someone and liking him? If so, what are the practical ramifications of this?
4. If we gave to everyone in need, we would literally have nothing left. How do we discern when to give and when not to give?

A woman was surprised at church one day when another woman, who had often snubbed her, went out of her way to give her a big hug before the service. She wondered what had initiated her change of heart.

She got her answer at the end of the service when the pastor instructed, “Your assignment for next week is the same as last week. I want you to go out there and love somebody you just can’t stand” (adapted from *Reader’s Digest*, [4/02], p. 48).

- If loving others were only as easy as giving a hug to someone you don’t like, we all could excel in love.
- Just hug them and move on!
- But, love is a bit more difficult than that!
- It requires continual effort, because at the heart of loving others is putting the other person ahead of yourself, and that is always a huge battle.
- For this reason, the New Testament as a whole and the apostle John in this letter never tire of exhorting us to love one another.

Think of this...

- John had seen the love of Christ demonstrated that night in the Upper Room, when Jesus took the basin of water and washed the disciples' feet.
 - He then heard Jesus say (John 13:34-35), *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*
 - Then John saw the supreme demonstration of Christ's love when He willingly went to the cross to die for our sins.
 - And so the "son of thunder" became known as the "apostle of love."
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- John has already reminded his little children of Jesus' old-new commandment (2:7-11).
 - He will yet devote the major part of chapter 4 (verses 7-21) to this theme.
 - In fact, six times in 1 & 2 John, he refers directly to Jesus' command that we love one another (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5; plus the allusion in 1 John 2:7).

In our text, John is in the second cycle of applying the three tests of authentic Christianity: the moral test of obedience to Jesus Christ (2:28-3:10); the social test of love for one another (3:11-18); and, after a digression about assurance (3:19-24), the doctrinal test of believing the truth about Jesus Christ (4:1-7).

If we get weary of hearing over and over about the need to love one another, we should remember that John wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who knows our hearts.

We need to examine ourselves constantly because our default mode is to revert to selfishness, not to love.

In our text, John again gets out his black and white paint and does not mix them into shades of gray. He wants to expose the errors of the heretics in the plainest of terms. So he contrasts the world with the church. His message is,

The mark of the world is hatred, but the mark of the church is love.

That is a nice, clean statement, but as you ponder it you have to ask, "Is that *really* true?" I've known some wonderful, loving unbelievers and I've also known some real scoundrels in the church. We've all met people who claim to be Christians, but frankly, you'd rather snuggle with a porcupine than try to get close to them! So, how do we square what John says with what we actually experience? Hopefully, that question will be answered as we work through the text.

Here is John's words again in our passage in 1 John 3:11-18, *"¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates*

you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

There are at least two things that John tells us pretty clearly in these verses...

2 Things John Tells us in 1 John 3:11-18:

(1) The mark of the world is hatred –

(2) The mark of the church is love -

THE MARK OF THE WORLD IS HATRED

Notice **verse 11-13** of our passage, "¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you."

Sometimes to define a somewhat vague notion like love it is helpful to contrast it with the opposite, hatred. So John contrasts the love that we are to have for one another with Cain's murder of his brother, Abel (3:11-12). Then, he states (3:13), "Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you."

Notice (think about this) John here reflects Jesus' words in the Upper Room in **John 15:18-19** [see also, John 17:14]), "¹⁸If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

Not to doubt Jesus' words, but rather to understand them, we have to ask, "Is this really true? How is the world marked by hatred, especially in light of all the nice unbelievers out there?"

To answer these questions, we need to define our terms...

Defining Some Terms in 1 John 3:11ff:

(1) "World" = the unbelieving world and false teachers - By *the world*, John means the unbelieving world, of course, which is under Satan's dominion in opposition to God. But, in particular, John was targeting those who had left the church and were promoting false teaching about the person and work of Christ. In **1 John 2:19**, he said, "*They went out from us, but they were not really of us....*" In the doctrinal section that follows our text, he says that these false prophets have gone out into the world (4:1). They are the spirit

of antichrist, which “is already in the world” (4:3). “They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them” (4:5).

- (2) **“Love” = a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved** - When John speaks of *love*, he points us to the supreme example of Jesus laying down His life for us (3:16). Thus a helpful definition of biblical love is: *a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved*. Jesus sacrificed Himself because He cared for us and He is committed to seek our highest good, namely, that ultimately we might share His glory.
- (3) **“Hate” = a selfish, insensitive attitude that shows itself in disregarding others’ good as I seek my own interest** - Since hatred is the opposite of love, we may define it as, *a selfish, insensitive attitude that shows itself in disregarding others’ good as I seek my own interests*. The essence of hatred is the self-centered bent of fallen human nature that says, “I’ll help you if it helps me or if it’s not too much of a hassle. But if it comes down to you or me, I’m looking out for me!” When we understand hatred as such, we can see that it characterizes the unbelieving world. The world is motivated by self-interest. Self-sacrifice, to the world, is crazy.

You may be thinking, “But, what about examples of genuine love on the part of unbelievers?” While it may be true that most unbelievers are motivated by selfishness, we often see examples of unbelievers who sacrifice themselves on behalf of others.

- We see unbelieving parents who give themselves selflessly on behalf of their children.
- We hear of those who donate a kidney so that a family member, or even a perfect stranger, might live.
- We hear of soldiers who willingly die to protect their comrades.

Don’t these examples contradict John’s words about the world’s hatred? I believe that such examples may be explained by the fact of God’s common grace. Jesus said (Matt. 5:45) that the Father “causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” He said (Luke 6:35b), “He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.”

Love is one of God’s gifts that He has not withdrawn completely from unregenerate people. It should serve as a witness to them, to point them to the source of it, because, as John will point out (4:7), “love is from God.” But, the fact that God has not completely withdrawn His grace from this rebellious world does not contradict John’s generalization, that the world is marked by hatred (see Rom. 1:29-31; 2 Tim. 3:1-2).

John says five things about hatred in our text, which are in direct contrast with God’s love that is to characterize the believer...

5 Things About Hatred (in 1 John 3:11-18) that Contrast God's Love: (God's love should characterize the believer)

(1) Hatred is typified in Adam's firstborn, Cain (1 John 3:11-12) - *"¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."*

This is the only explicit Old Testament reference in John's epistles, and the only proper name, except for references to Christ or God. I think that John chose Cain because he was the first person born on this earth under the curse of sin. His hatred toward his brother typifies the self-centered, evil bent of the fallen human heart.

While our self-centeredness seldom goes to the extreme of murder, the roots are there. Hebrews 11:4 says that Abel offered a better sacrifice by faith. Since faith is always a response to God's revelation, we must assume that God had revealed to Cain and Abel the proper kind of sacrifice that He required. Abel obeyed by faith. Cain, in defiance and disobedience, brought an unacceptable offering. When his brother's offering was accepted and Cain's was rejected, his envy began to seethe. Even though God confronted Cain and exhorted him to repent (Gen. 4:6-7), Cain ignored the warning. As a result, he slaughtered his brother (the Greek word used means to slit the throat or to butcher).

John assumes the doctrine of original sin in 1 John 3:14, when he states that we have passed out of death into life, but the one who does not love abides in death. People do not begin as neutral or basically good and then decide either to choose or reject God. People are born into this world in a state of spiritual death (Eph. 2:1). They need the new birth in order to pass out of death into life. The only other time that phrase appears is in John 5:24, where Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." So John begins with Adam's firstborn, Cain, who typifies the hatred of the fallen human race.

(2) Hatred originates with the devil (1 John 3:12, 15) - *"¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous." and "¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."*

Cain was "of the evil one" (3:12). John's reference to the murderer (3:15) recalls Jesus' words in John 8:44, where He states that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning." So if we think that either hatred or love finds their roots in the human heart, we have not gone deep enough. **Hatred finds its source in the devil, whereas love originates with God.**

This is not to blame the devil and absolve sinful people of responsibility for their sin. But, to harbor hatred is to oppose God and put yourself in league with the devil!

Therefore, we need to be quick to judge our own hearts when we see these selfish attitudes rearing their ugly head.

- (3) **Hatred divides people and may result in the taking of life (1 John 3:12, 15)** - *“¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.” and “¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”*

At best, hatred becomes indifference or avoidance of another person, causing separation and distance in relationships. At worst, selfishness and hatred become murder (James 4:1-2). In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21, 22; see also Matt. 15:19) Jesus said that anger is tantamount to murder in God’s sight, because all murder begins there.

While we cringe when we hear of someone murdering someone else, we often tolerate the roots of this sin by excusing our anger as justifiable. We need to see our own selfish anger as hideous and yank it out by the roots!

- (4) **Hatred is motivated by personal sin (1 John 3:12)** - *“¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.”*

John asks, “And for what reason did he slay him?” It was not because Abel was a scoundrel doing evil. Rather, Cain’s deeds were evil and Abel’s were righteous. The root of Cain’s slaughter of his brother was that Cain was in rebellion against God. So, while hatred may be directed at other people, invariably the hateful person is at odds with God. He needs to confront his own sinful heart. Thus hatred is typified in Adam’s firstborn, Cain, It originated with the devil. It divides people and may result in murder. It is motivated by personal sin or rebellion against God.

- (5) **Hatred is the evidence of spiritual death (3:14, 15)** – *“¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”*

A person whose life is marked by selfish hatred of others shows no evidence of new life in Christ. That is the meaning of John’s words in verses 14 & 15. He is not saying that no murderer may be saved. Paul was a murderer before he was saved, and both David and Moses murdered men after they were saved. As in 3:9, here John uses present tense verbs that point to the overall direction of a person’s life. A person whose life is marked by a pattern of selfishness, envy, jealousy, strife, and hatred gives evidence that he remains in spiritual death. While John’s words are an evidential test of a person’s spiritual

condition, they are also an exhortation to those that profess to believe in Christ. As believers, we have to battle the hatred that stems from our own selfishness. While on the one hand, spiritual growth results inevitably from spiritual life, on the other hand it does not happen without our constant effort. Whenever the deeds of the flesh rear their ugly heads, we must put them to death and replace them with the fruit of the Spirit (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:19-23).

Thus, John shows that the mark of the world is hatred—the self-centered, “look out for number one” mentality, which if unchecked, results in murder. In stark contrast, he says that...

THE MARK OF THE CHURCH IS LOVE

Here is John's words again in our passage in 1 John 3:11-18, *“¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*

John draws a sharp, point-for-point contrast between the hatred that marks the world and the love that marks the church. Whereas hatred is typified in Adam's firstborn, ...

5 Characteristics of Love that Mark the Church:

(1) Love is typified in God's firstborn, Christ (1 John 3:16) – *“¹⁶By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”*

Verse 16 literally reads, *“By this we have experientially come to know love, that That One laid down His life for us.”* The cross is the supreme demonstration of what real love—God's love—is. There is hardly a passage in the New Testament that speaks of God's love that does not also speak of the cross. The most familiar is another 3:16, John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (See, also, Gal. 2:20; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 5:25; 1 John 4:10.) If you want to know what God's love is like, look at Jesus, the Righteous One, who willingly sacrificed Himself on behalf of the ungodly.

Whereas hatred originates with the devil, ...

- (2) **Love originates with God** - John will state this directly in 1 John 4:7, but it is implicit in our text. Love in the believer comes from God. In 1 John 3:10b, John said that the one who does not love is not of God, implying that the one who loves is of God.

In 1 John 3:17, he says that if we do not demonstrate practical love for those in need, the love of God does not abide in us. If you lack love for someone, first make sure that you are born of God. Then, ask Him for it.

Whereas hatred divides people and may result in murder...

- (3) **Love unites people and results in laying down our lives for others (1 John 3:16-17)**
 – *“¹⁶By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”*

Jesus showed His love by laying down His life for us. Thus (1 John 3:16), *“we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”* That is a hard saying! Be honest—would you lay down your life for the people in this room? You can easily sit here and say, “Yes, I’d die for my fellow Christians.” But, the urge to save your own skin is pretty strong. Who can *truly* say in advance, “I’d die for my brothers?”

But John doesn’t leave us to sit around speculating about what we might do if persecution hits. He brings it down to everyday living (1 John 3:17), *“But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”* Ouch! It’s easy to *say* that you would lay down your life for the brethren. But if you aren’t doing it inch by inch, in the little details of setting aside your selfishness to serve others, beginning at home (Eph. 5:25), it’s empty talk to say, “I’d die for my brothers in Christ!”

Listen, self-sacrifice is *never* convenient. It’s always more of a hassle to meet someone’s needs than to ignore him. But, John’s point is the same as Jesus’ point in the parable of the Good Samaritan: We must not ignore others’ needs, but rather, sacrifice our time, energy, and money to help them out. This does not mean indiscriminately doling out money to those who are lazy or irresponsible (2 Thess. 3:10-12). We need discernment and wisdom to know how best to help a needy person. But we also need to be careful not to excuse our indifference by labeling the other person as lazy or irresponsible. Love unites people through practical deeds of self-sacrifice.

Whereas hatred is motivated by personal sin ...

(4) **Love is motivated by God's love in Christ** - That's the point of verse 16. *"¹⁶By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

If God's love as shown on the cross abides in your heart, it will flow through you to others. If you're running short on love, stop and meditate on what Jesus did for you. If the servant who had been forgiven the huge debt had stopped to think about it, he would have forgiven his fellow servant the lesser debt (Matt. 18:23-35). Or, as John states (4:11), "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Finally, whereas hatred is the evidence of spiritual death...

(5) **Love is the evidence of spiritual life (1 John 3:14)** - John states in 1 John 3:14, *"¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."*

While this fruit of the Spirit never grows to perfect maturity in this lifetime, you should be able to see growth in love when you compare your self-centered life before conversion with your focus since you were saved. If you say that you know Christ, but continue to live for yourself, if you're unwilling to be inconvenienced or sacrifice yourself and your possessions to meet the needs of others, you need to examine whether or not you've truly passed out of death into life. If you have tasted God's love in Christ at the cross, the new direction of your life will be to grow in love for others.

CONCLUSION

In verse 11, John says, *"¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another"*

He means, from the beginning of your Christian life you were taught to love one another. It's a basic truth that you should start to learn and practice from the first day of your Christian experience. God's love flowing through us to one another should so mark the church that it draws a sharp contrast between us and the world.

Now that we know we're required to love others, how are we to do it? In closing, there are three primary ways we emulate God and express His love toward others.

3 Primary Ways We Emulate God's Love Toward Others:

(1) **With Christlike character** - Love begins with a changed heart. We must cooperate with the Spirit's transforming work and put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (Colossians 3:12). And isn't this exactly what we need if we're to love difficult people? Otherwise, all our expressions of love are rooted in hypocrisy because our hearts haven't been softened. **We'll never reach the point of perfect love**

for others, but we can become better at it as we let the Spirit work in and through us.

- (2) ***With Christlike behavior*** - You're probably familiar with 1 Corinthians 13, the famous "love chapter." But have you considered what it requires of you? Love responds with patience and kindness toward exasperating, cantankerous, or mean-spirited people. It doesn't behave jealously, proudly, or disgracefully, nor does it demand its own way and rights. Instead, it considers what's good for others, and—perhaps the most difficult requirement of all—it's not easily provoked to anger or exasperation and doesn't hold grudges.
- (3) ***With Christlike sacrifice*** - Since Jesus' death on the cross was the supreme example of His love for us, we too must be willing to lay down our life for others (1 John 3:16). Although some Christians have literally died for fellow believers, our sacrifices are generally a matter of giving ourselves in service for others, spending precious time to help them, or simply denying ourselves and our desires in order to do what is best for someone else. To have Christ's sacrificial attitude, we must selflessly consider others' interests as more important than our own (Philippians 2:3-5).

Loving like Christ is a tall order, but we have a mighty God who is at work in us to make it possible. When we start to love people as God does, we help establish unity in the church, create harmony in our homes, and present a powerful witness in the world because our love for each other distinguishes us as Christ's disciples (John 13:35). **Loving like Christ is a tall order, but we have a mighty God who is at work in us to make it possible.**