

## ***“What is Love?”*** ***1 John 3:11-16***

Intro:

***Love Story*** was an extremely important book when I was young. Eric Segal defined love in the book as, *“Love means you never have to say you’re sorry.”* While this phrase hit a chord in the early seventies, it is clearly untrue. Any married person will tell you that love means saying you are sorry many times. The Apostle John wrote often about love in this epistle. Here in our text, he defines the love he defined the love he wrote about. **1 John 3:16** says, ***“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”***

Love here is agape, and John tells us three things about the love that must characterize us. He said:

- I. Love is Commanded. (v. 11)***
- II. Love is Not Hate. (v. 12-13)***
- III. Love is Evidence of our Salvation. (v. 14-16)***

### ***I. Love is Commanded. (v. 11)***

A. **V.11** continues the thought from the end of **v.10**;

***“Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”***

What righteousness must we practice to be assured that we are of God? First, we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

B. The temptation is always to recite one or more of the passages in which Jesus commands us to love one another and miss completely that John tells us that love is a command.

*“Agape”* is not, at its core, an emotion. It is a decision.

We tend to define love the way the world defines it. Love is an emotion that overwhelms us emotionally and makes us *“fall in love.”* While emotion is involved in Biblical love, it follows after a decision is made and a surrendering to God’s command happens. The great example of this kind of love is in **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**.

***“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”***

Our obeying God in loving Him teaches us how we need to love one another.

## *II. Love is Not Hate. (v. 12-13)*

A. To help us understand what Biblical God-given love really is, John told us next what love is not. Love is not hate. ***“[Love is] not 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. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.”***

B. Biblical love is not hate. John loves to use the literary device of stating a positive and then reinforcing the positive by stating its opposite. (1 John 1:5)

***“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”***

John’s emphasis is subtle as well as obvious. A brother was supposed to love his brother. What Cain did toward Able was not love.

C. John’s second point is an important one that we must not miss. Biblical love does not imply that others will love you in return. In his comparison Cain clearly hated Able despite the fact that Able did nothing wrong to incur his wrath. Cain hated Able for the reason that the world hates us. He was righteous. When we live righteously, the world hates us because our very behavior exposes their lives as sinful.

## *III. Love is Evidence of our Salvation. (v. 14-16)*

A. We have learned that Biblical love does not begin with emotion but with a decision to, with God’s help, love even the sometimes unlovable. Second, we have seen what Biblical love is not. Love is not hate and it does not mean that if we love, everyone will love us in return.

B. If some will hate us because we love, why should we decide to love as God loves? One reason is because it assures us that we belong to Him. (1 John 3:14-15)

***“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”***

1. We can be assured that something miraculous has happened to us and we are really saved because we love our brothers and sisters in the Lord like He does.

2. We do not love because we have done a cost benefit analysis. We love in spite of the fact that it may cost us to love them and that they may never return our love. We choose to love our brothers because we want to do what the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to do. Christ changed us so that His will is supreme in our lives.

C. Second, we love because He loved us and showed us what true love is. (1 John 3:16)  
***“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”***

1. We understand Biblical love first because we experienced it. Christ laid down His life on our behalf. It was for you and for me He died. What kind of love is it that Christ, God the Son would do all this for us?

2. We also know Biblical love because we did not deserve this love. His amazing love is the basis of our love. We love because we know His love, and because He loved us we can love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Have we decided to love our brothers and sisters in the Lord, even if they are not worthy of our love?

Will we ask God to help us to love them even if they will not love us in return; even if they hate us and seek to harm us in return?

Do we understand that our love for our brothers and sisters in the Lord is one practice of righteousness that makes our being a child of God obvious? How obvious is our relationship with God?