

**1 John 3:11-18**  
*Disciples Love One Another*

“What’s love got to do with it?”

- That’s the title of the song performed by Tina Turner
- It was her most famous single ever recorded<sup>1</sup>

So, what’s love got to do with it?

- For the Christian, everything!

At its most basic level, love is the fulfillment of the Law

- Love the Lord
- Love your neighbor as yourself

The Bible has a LOT to say about love

- We could spend our time this morning doing nothing but reading verses on love
- We would be here quite a while

There are a few verses that I would like to highlight

- Verses that will help to set the stage for our sermon this morning

“**God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**” (Rom 5:8)

- God loves the unlovely, “**while we were yet sinners**”

This is an amazing thought!

- God took the initiative

“**hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us**” (Rom 5:5)

- God’s love has been “**poured out within our hearts**”

This applies to every single believer, no exceptions

- The Holy Spirit is the One who bears witness to this love

“**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**” (1 Thess 4:9-10)

- No one has to teach a believer, “Now you have to love”
- God Himself teaches His children to do this

Even though you may be practicing love toward the brethren, there is always room for progress and growth

- Paul urges these believers to “**excel still more**”

The apostle Peter tells us how we are to love our brothers and sisters

- “**fervently love one another from the heart**” (1 Pet 1:22b; cf. 4:8a)

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What's\\_Love\\_Got\\_to\\_Do\\_with\\_It\\_\(song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What's_Love_Got_to_Do_with_It_(song))

Would God characterize your brotherly love as “**fervent**”?

- Intense
- Persevering
- Devoted

When you think about the fruit of the Spirit, what comes to mind?

- These nine character qualities are demonstrations of the Spirit’s work in the lives of believers

What is the very first fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22?

- Love!

Jesus told His disciples, “**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**” (John 13:34-35)

- Jesus’ words are astounding, “**as I have loved you...you also love one another**”
- He is the Standard of love!

Jesus then says, “**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another**”

- Not if we dress the same way
- Not if we are of the same race

People will know that we are Jesus’ disciples “**if you have love for one another**”

- If we are negligent in our love for other believers, it will drastically affect our witness!

We may have right theology

- We may have good teaching
- We may have nice buildings

But if we aren’t showing love for the brethren, then we have missed the point!

- Have we missed the point?
- Have you?

I completely understand that there are some people who are harder to love than others

- You may be thinking of someone right now
- “Kevin, if you knew of so-and-so...”

If that is your excuse for not loving the Church, then you have forgotten Jesus’ love

- “**God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**” (Rom 5:8)

Christian friend, you can never say, “I can’t love that person”

- You can say, “I won’t”
- But you can’t say, “I can’t”

Why?

- “**the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us**” (Rom 5:5)

God has given you the capacity to love even the worst of sinners

- Because God has loved the worst of sinners
- And God’s love is flowing through your spiritual veins

I hope that you see that this issue of loving one another is absolutely fundamental

- It is critical to our relationships with one another

I want us to turn to the book of 1 John

- Just 5 chapters in length

The apostle tells us plainly what his purpose is

- Look at 1 John 5:13, “**These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life**”

First, he is writing to believers, not unbelievers

- He writes to those “**who believe in the name of the Son of God**”

Second, he is writing to encourage believers

- “**that you may know that you have eternal life**”

Throughout this first epistle, there are various “tests” that he puts before the believer

- They are not designed to test whether someone is a Christian or not
- They are designed to assure and comfort those who are Christians

That doesn't mean that there isn't room for self-evaluation and progress

- As you read 1 John, you need to ask yourselves, “Does this describe me? Do I pass the test? How do I need to change in light of this truth?”

False teachers were infiltrating the churches in this area

- Believers were being told outright lies
- The Gospel was being compromised

So John writes as a seasoned pastor to encourage these believers

- To comfort them

One of the encouragements that he will give is to remind the believers of the crucial nature of loving one another

- This is not an optional matter
- This is not a secondary issue

### **Let's read 1 John 3:11-18**

This Text shows us four (4) perspectives as it relates to how believers are to love one another

- Righteous/evil (3:11-12)
- Life/death (3:13-14)
- Love/hate (3:15-16)
- Selfless vs. selfish (3:17-18)

#### **I. Righteous/evil (3:11-12)**

11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

In order to put this verse in context, look at the verse before it

- 1 John 3:10, “**By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother**”

Two means are given whereby the children of God and distinct and different from the children of the devil

- A child of the devil doesn't practice righteousness
- A child of the devil doesn't love his brother

Put in a positive light, a child of God

- Practices righteousness
- Loves his brother

This is very straightforward, right?

- That shouldn't shock us

This isn't the first time that John mentions the need for brothers to love one another

- Look back with me at 1 John 2, "**The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes**" (1 John 2:9-11)

John says here in 3:11, "**this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another**"

- This isn't something new
- This is an old commandment

From the standpoint of John, this commandment goes back to Jesus' teaching

- "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another**" (John 13:34)

This command goes back even further, though<sup>2</sup>

- "**you shall love your neighbor as yourself**" (Lev 19:18)

As far back as the days of Leviticus, God's people were commanded to love one another

- It wasn't something new at the time of Christ

What was new was the manifestation of that love

- Jesus Himself was the perfect Embodiment of love

Jesus laid down His life for those who would believe in Him

- He loved the unlovely

12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother.

Having given the broad command to love one another, John then uses an unexpected example

- Cain!

Two descriptions are given of Cain

- He "**was of the evil one**"
- He "**slew his brother**"

This is strong language, isn't it?

- Cain "**was of the evil one**"

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, 1-3 John*, 131.

In the words of 1 John 3:10, Cain was a child of the devil

- Because he didn't practice righteousness
- Because he didn't love his brother

Cain was a worshipper of God<sup>3</sup>

- He offered sacrifices to God

But Cain didn't obey God

- He didn't offer the right sacrifice

Isn't that scary?

- A person can be spiritually active
- A person can be willing to offer sacrifices
- Yet that person can still be a child of the devil!

Look at Judas Iscariot

- He did all the external things that the other apostles did
- Yet his heart was not changed

Cain hated his brother Abel

- He "slew his brother"

The word here means to butcher or slaughter

- It signifies a violent death<sup>4</sup>
- It was used of animals being killed in sacrifice, probably through the slitting of the throat<sup>5</sup>

Cain is the first human murderer<sup>6</sup>

- Yet he was influenced by Satan to accomplish that
- Jesus says of Satan that he is "a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (John 8:44)

Cain "was of the evil one"

- He was a child of Satan

"It is not that Cain by murdering his brother became the child of the devil; but, being a child of the devil, his actions were evil and culminated in the murder of his brother."<sup>7</sup>

- Cain's character drove his actions
- Because he was evil, he displayed his hatred through murder

And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Why did Cain kill Abel?

- It's interesting that John does not mention love/hate
- John goes back to the issue of righteousness vs. evil

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>4</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary, 1 John*, 307.

<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, 133.

<sup>6</sup> Kistemaker, 306.

<sup>7</sup> Glenn W. Barker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 1 John*, 335.

Cain was unrighteous

- Abel was righteous

The question that demands to be asked is really quite simple

- Are you righteous or evil?

You see, everything stems from this issue

- If you are righteous, there will be evidences of grace in your life
- If you are evil, there will be an absence of righteousness and the very presence of wickedness in your life

Either way, there will be fruit

- What is being shown in your life?

- **Righteous/evil (3:11-12)**

## **II. Life/death (3:13-14)**

### 13 Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.

Transitioning from the example of Cain and Abel, John makes the statement, “do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you”

- The believers may have thought that the murder of Cain was a rare occurrence
- But John is quick to correct such thinking

The reality is that the world hates those who are opposed to it

- There are all kinds of Cains ready to kill all kinds of Abels

Christians must not be caught off guard by this

- Rather, they must expect persecution

“In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33)

- We can't be shocked when the world turns on us because of our association and identification with Christ

Jesus reminded His disciples, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated you*” (John 15:18)

The world “hates” believers

- We stand against their system of thinking
- We stand against Satan, the god of this world

How did the world treat Jesus?

- They hated Him
- They attempted to kill Him
- The religious leaders eventually had Him killed

How did the world treat the apostles?

- Hatred
- Stoning
- John was boiled in oil and exiled to Patmos

## 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.

The reason why the world hates us is because “we have passed out of death into life”

- There has been a transfer

When was the last time that you thought about your life before Christ?

- Think about it right now

You were in the sphere of death

- You were spiritually separated from Christ
- You were spiritually dead
- You were spiritually blind

But through the new birth, God transferred you out of that darkness

- “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14)

Again, John’s word order is not what we would expect

- We would anticipate him saying, “You love the brethren because you have been transferred out of death into life”

But that’s not what he says

- John writes, “The assurance that you have been transferred out of death into life is the fact that you love the brethren!”

The basis for assurance is the reality of their love toward one another!

## He who does not love abides in death.

As if his previous statement wasn’t strong enough, the apostle John then writes, “he who does not love abides in death”

- Wow!

He uses two present tense verbs which portray continual, habitual action

- “he who does not continually love continually abides in death”

We can’t describe our love in past tense verbs

- “I used to love the brothers”
- “I loved that person before, but not now”

On the contrary, love is to be a present tense reality

- A “right now” attitude that manifests itself in action

If that doesn’t describe you, then the Word of God says that you abide in death!

- You are a child of the devil!

This is black-and-white language

- These are strong words!

This language should really cause us to examine our hearts

- Are we loving our brothers and sisters as a regular part of our lives?

This is really a matter of life and death!

- Please don't miss this point
- **Righteous/evil (3:11-12)**
- **Life/death (3:13-14)**

### **III. Love/hate (3:15-16)**

#### 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer:

We have just examined the phrase, “**he who does not love abides in death**”

- Now John puts it another way here in verse 15, “**everyone who hates his brother is a murderer**”

Again, John uses a present tense verb

- “Everyone who continually hates his brother is a murderer”

“**murderer**”

- That's a strong term!

But that is what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “**You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’**”

**But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go into the fiery hell*” (Mt 5:21-22)**

- You can be a murderer without ever committing the act
- You can be a murderer with your thoughts, words, and actions

The only difference between hatred and murder is the action

- The attitude of both is the same!<sup>8</sup>

Let's be honest

- There are times when we don't always love our brothers and sisters in Christ
- Hateful words, thoughts, and actions may manifest themselves

But John is dealing with someone who continually displays this attitude

- A way of life
- A habit of life

Is there someone in this church who you continually avoid?

- Is there someone who couldn't sit down for a meal together?

If someone comes to mind, then you may be guilty of hating your brother or sister

- If so, be very careful!

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<sup>8</sup> MacArthur, 134.



and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

To avoid any confusion on the matter, John writes, “and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”

- No person who is actively and continually hating his brother can claim to be a Christian

Compare verses 14 & 15

- “He who does not love abides in death” (3:14)
- “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (3:15)

Again, the blunt language may take us off guard

- John equates “he who does not love” with being a “murderer”
- He equates abiding “in death” with not having “eternal life”

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us;

John has made a big deal about loving the brethren

- He has given a bad example in Cain
- But what about a good example?

Isn't it strange that John does not mention Abel?

- Rather, John selects Christ

Notice how John puts himself on the same level as his readers<sup>9</sup>

- He says, “We know love by this...” (emphasis mine)

How do we know love?

- “that [Christ] laid down his life for us”

There is no higher or better Example of love than Jesus' death on the cross

- He volunteered His life
- He willingly gave it up

There is an element of choice and volition

- No one made Him do it

The Gospel is the fundamental illustration of selfless love!

1 John 3:16 is very similar to 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.”

- Same author
- Same content

and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

The end of verse 16 is the point that John is driving at

- Those of us who have experienced the love of Christ are now called to action

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<sup>9</sup> Kistemaker, 310.

The seasoned pastor writes, “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”

- The same Greek word for “lay down”
- The same Greek word for “life/lives”

Jesus told His disciples, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12-13)

Do you see what John is saying?

- We should love the brothers as Jesus has loved us
- Talk about a hard statement!

Look at your life, as I look at mine

- In what tangible ways have you laid your life down for the believers here at CBC?
- In what specific ways have you sacrificed yourself for others?

Jesus isn’t asking us to be crucified

- His sacrifice was sufficient to atone for the sins of all who will believe

But Jesus is inviting us to imitate His example in loving the brethren

- Are you following in His footsteps?

What word would describe your actions toward the brethren here at CBC?

- Love or hate?

What evidence can you show to support your answer?

- **Righteous/evil (3:11-12)**
- **Life/death (3:13-14)**
- **Love/hate (3:15-16)**

#### **IV. Selfless vs. selfish (3:17-18)**

17 But whoever has the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

Up to this point, we have been talking in theoretical terms

- Somewhat of an intellectual decision to be made

But verses 17-18 don’t allow us to stay there

- These verses force us to look at real life, practical examples of how we are showing love
- Or, how we are neglecting to show love

All of us have been blessed financially

- Some more than others
- But even the poorest among us is still very well off when compared to the world

What happens, then, when we hear of someone having a financial need?

- What is your first reaction?

Do you openly and willingly try to supply the need?

- Or do you “close [your] heart” against your brother?

This isn't to say that we throw proper stewardship out the window

- This verse doesn't override other verses that talk about wise spending, discernment, etc.

But we have to examine our hearts

- When was the last time that you saw your brother in need?
- Did you help him?

If you see your brother lacking in the basic issue of life and refuse to help him, how can you say that the love of God is operative in your life?

- What if others treated you the way that you treat others?

It is a self-centered person who continually takes from others while not giving back

- Jesus said, "**It is more blessed to give than to receive**" (Acts 20:35)

Again, I remind you of Romans 5:8, "**God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**"

- "**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son**" (John 3:16a, emphasis mine)

How can you call yourself a Christian if you never give to others?

- John would ask you, "**how does the love of God abide in [you]?**"

### 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

The hard reality is that it is easy to love "**with word or with tongue**"

- It is easy to say, "I love the brethren"
- It is easy to say, "I would help my brother in need."

The difficult matter is to love "**in deed and truth**"

- Actively loving your brothers and sisters
- Manifesting your theology

We are familiar with the expression, "Actions speak louder than words"

- Nowhere is that more true than this context

It doesn't matter how much you talk about love

- It matters how much you practice love

The apostle John is not dealing with subjective matters here

- He doesn't say, "If you feel like loving the brethren"
- He doesn't say, "If you want to love the brethren"

John is dealing with objective matters here

- A choice
- An act of the will
- A decision to obey

Are there people that you would rather not love?

- Perhaps there are at times

But remind yourself of the Gospel in these moments

- Christ died for you, when you were ungodly
- Christ died for you, when you were a sinner
- Christ died for you, when it was your sins that nailed Him to the cross
- Christ died for you, when you were a child of wrath
- Christ died for you, when you hated Him

What is keeping you back from loving the brethren?

- You can't say, "I can't love that person."
- You can only say, "I won't love that person."

It is very hard for you to love someone when you don't spend much time together

- Some of you intentionally come in late and leave early

How are you supposed to get to know people?

- How are you going to love others this way?

The early church was committed to loving each other

- They spent time together in each other's homes
- They gathered together in the home churches
- They broke bread together
- They prayed together
- They sacrificed financially for one another
- Their lives were knit together

Does that describe you?

- Who are you close with in this church?
- Who do you spend time with outside of Sunday morning?

I would challenge you to evaluate your brotherly love

- Are you fervently loving one another?
- Are you cold in your love for others?

You can't say "I love God" while hating your brother!<sup>10</sup>

- "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20)

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<sup>10</sup> Kistemaker, 311.