

# Crosswalk: How To Live As Followers Of Jesus Christ

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*  
(Romans 12:1 ESV)

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*  
(Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV)

## Love

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1 John 3:10-18

Rev. Paul Carter

### **Introduction:**

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to 1 John 3:11-18; that's on page 1022 in your pew Bible. For the last several weeks we've been talking about how to live on the other side of the cross. The Bible seems to suggest that how we RESPOND to the message of the cross indicates whether or not we have truly RECEIVED the message of the cross. Do you understand what I'm saying there? Last week we talked about how forgiven people forgive – if you don't give it it means you never got it – well here we are saying much the same thing. In this passage we are going to hear that loved people love. I. Howard Marshall puts it this way, he says:

“A person cannot come into a real relationship with a loving God without being transformed into a loving person.”<sup>1</sup>

So loved people love!

If you have received the love of God in Christ then obviously and appropriately you turn around and you begin to extend that same type of love to other people. That is exactly what the Apostle John is saying in this passage. Hear now the Word of the Lord beginning at verse 10.

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<sup>1</sup> I. Howard Marshall as cited by David Jackman in *The Message Of John's Letters* The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1988), 98.

By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:10–18 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord – thanks be to God!

The argument that John makes in verses 10-15 is fairly straightforward. He is saying that the way we love demonstrates to the world what family we belong to. Cain killed his brother because he belonged to his father the devil. We love each other because we belong to our Father who is in heaven. We love one another in a way that reflects how God loves us through Jesus Christ.

That's the point of the first paragraph.

Now I just want to pause here before we get to the second paragraph and zoom out a little bit so that you can understand why John is saying all of this. The issue in 1 John is that these people were wondering whether or not they were really saved. Some people had left their church claiming to be the real believers, claiming to have access to the deep truths of God and disparaging the simple, street level faith of the people they left behind. So John is trying to assure them now that they really do belong to the family of God. That's why he is saying things like:

by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.... By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:3–6 ESV)

John is saying, you know who the real Christians are by looking at how they live. These folks who left talked a good talk but they had no walk. They weren't obeying. They weren't behaving and as he goes on to say in chapter 3 they weren't loving. So how could they be the real people of God? They were all talk and no walk.

But you guys are walking great! That's what John says! You look like dad! You love like people who have been loved by God in Christ. That's the big picture here – that's why this text is in the

Bible. John is showing them how the real sons and daughters of God love so that they can grow in their assurance of salvation. I think that's going to be helpful for us to see.

But for now we are interested in what he says about this distinctive brand of Christian love. That's what he's talking about in verses 16-18.

## What Does It Look Like?

The first thing he says is this. Christian love is:

### 1. **Sacrificial**

Look at verse 16: "By this we know love that he laid down his life for us." Christian love is first and foremost defined and delineated by the cross of Jesus Christ.

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 ESV)

Sacrifice is the essence of Christian love.

Alright – but practically speaking, what does that look like? Most of us will never be called upon to die on a cross, so how will we demonstrate this distinctly Christian type of love? Well, let me give you 4 things you will almost certainly have to sacrifice if you want to love other people according to the family likeness.

#### i. Time.

You've probably heard that kids spell love T-I-M-E – apparently kids are terribly spellers – but I think the point is that nothing communicates love to your kids better than the sacrifice of time. You know this as a parent but it's equally true in every area of life. It takes time to visit someone in the hospital. It takes time to make a meal and deliver it to a family in need. It takes time to serve as a leader in Jr. High. It takes time to help out at VBS.

As I walked around each morning as the kids arrived here for program I saw a lot of people who looked like their heavenly father. You have daddy's birthmark all over you. I know you belong because I saw you giving up your time.

I also saw you sacrificing comfort.

ii. Comfort

It was hot out there but you were sticking it out and making it happen. You can't love people from the couch can you? Again you know this as a parent. Love means sacrificing your couch time in order to drive your kid to piano lessons or soccer practice. That's what love is – giving up what your body craves in order to serve and bless another person.

The third thing you are going to have to sacrifice if you want to love people in the Christian way is your own wants and preferences.

iii. Preference

Not my will but thine be done. That's how Jesus loved us – by doing something he would really rather not have done. That's what love is. And that's what it takes to love other people. In a loving church people willingly give up their preferences. They don't say: "You better keep playing my favourite songs or I'm out of here". That's not love. Parents don't say that to their kids. You listen to Raffi in your car and you watch Elmo on TV not because you like it but because your kids like it and that's what love is. Love is being willing to give up your own preferences in order to serve and care for other people.

I saw a lot of that kind of love about 9 years ago now when we brought our worship services together. I saw dad's birthmark on a lot of your faces as you gave up your preferred songs and music so that we could be again a multi-generational church. The fact that you did that so willingly tells me to whom you belong.

Fourthly – or at the least the fourth thing you are going to have to sacrifice here is of course your dignity.

#### iv. Dignity

Jesus made that very clear when he took off his outer robe, got down on his hands and knees and washed the disciples feet. He said:

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 also should do just as I have done to you. (John 13:14–15 ESV)

If the Son of God can do lowly, servile tasks in order to love and care for other people – then obviously so can we. That's the family way. There are no big shots, no fancy people in the family of God - just brothers and sisters doing what needs to be done in order to love and care for one another.

That's another thing I love about this church. We never have a hard time finding people to serve at the bottom. Sometimes in church there is a scramble to occupy the glory positions – everybody wants to serve on stage. They want to be in the band, or they want to be teachers or small group leaders. Those are the glory jobs. And sometimes it can be hard to get people to serve in the nursery or to peel potatoes in the kitchen – but not here. I'm always amazed by who does what in this church. Every week I am surprised to see Doctor's doing lice check or small business owners wiping bums and picking up fishy crackers. Where else would you see that kind of thing?

Only in the church!

That is distinctly Christian love. That's how we do it – because that's how Jesus did it! He took on flesh and dwelt among us! He gave up the glory of heaven for the servant's towel on earth. If he did it then we do it. That's how we show the family likeness in the way we love and serve one another.

Christian love is essentially sacrificial.

That's the main thing John is saying here but he then he goes on to provide a couple of other supporting or ancillary characteristics. We'll move a little quicker but according to John Christian love is also noticeably and distinctively:

## **2. Generous**

He says: "How can you call yourself a Christian if you see a brother or sister in need and you are not moved to help them?" Love, according to the Bible, is instinctively need meeting.

You see that in the Book of Acts. In the early church it says:

they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.  
(Acts 2:45 ESV)

Now it's not that they were becoming communists – they were just becoming Christians. They were not opposed to private property per se – its just that the ownership of that property didn't matter very much when compared to the needs of other people. So if a need arose then they sold something so that they could meet that need. Christian love is expensive but they were more than happy to pay the price.

And I can tell you this, your elders are more than happy to pay that price too. We regularly spend time at our board meetings reviewing the benevolent needs in the congregation – we did it this past Monday night. There is a family in need and we are prepared to come alongside them in very costly ways. Part of that will be time, but a big part of that will be money. Now, we have procedures and policies to govern how this happens - Christians are not to be foolish or inefficient and they are not to use charity to discourage normal, appropriate, healthy work. The Apostle Paul says that in 2 Thessalonians 3 – he says:

If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10 ESV)

So there is wisdom here, but the Christian way to love is to meet REAL, URGENT NEEDS with GENEROUS MATERIAL HELP. And that costs money.

We make no apology for that. Love in this church means giving generously so that we can love each other well. We love people on the other side of the world – and we love people here in our midst. We love people in real, urgent, useful ways. We pay the rent while you wait for your insurance check after a car accident. We pay for your dental work when it is causing you migraine headaches. We pay for lice patrol to come to your house when you are overwhelmed by what came home from school. We pay for glasses and prescriptions when you are a single mom and they aren't covered by your plan. Now you may not know about all that – there is no way that you could. It is done with the careful oversight of pastors and elders in a way that protects the dignity of those who need it. Just like in the New Testament.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and **laid it at the apostles' feet**, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:34–35 ESV)

That's how we do it in the family of God. There is a pot, a process and a bunch of well loved people. Thanks be to God!

Thirdly, John says that Christian love is eminently practical.

### **3. Practical**

He says in verse 18: “Little children let us NOT love in word or talk but IN DEED. I don't think he's saying that we can never SAY loving things to each other, I think he's just saying that words have no value APART from ACCOMPANYING DEEDS. He's basically saying the same thing here that James says. James the brother of the Lord says:

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (James 2:15–16 ESV)

WORDS unaccompanied by DEEDS have no value – the value is in the deeds. The proof is in the pudding as grandma used to say. Jesus used to say that too, which is probably where grandma got it from. Do you remember the parable Jesus told about the man who had two sons? Not the Prodigal Son Story, the other two son story. In Matthew 21:28 Jesus said:

“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard

today.’ 29 And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. 30 And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?” (Matthew 21:28–31 ESV)

Do you see what he’s saying? He’s saying: “What matters? Saying the right thing or doing the right thing?” One son said what his dad wanted to hear but then he never followed through – he never actually did anything. The other son said something stupid and ill considered, but then in the end he did what he should. Which of the two did the Father’s will? The one who actually did something.

Listen, friends, Christian love means more than having your heart in the right place – it means having your hands and feet in the right place too. It means having your feet in the kitchen, or in the nursery or in the portable. And it means having your hands in the dishwasher, on the snow shovel or in the fishy cracker bin.

Brothers and sisters do not love IN WORD and TALK – Oh, save us from all the sentiment!  
Christians love IN DEED.

That’s what John is saying; Christian love is eminently practical.

And then lastly, he’s saying Christian love is also courageously TRUTHFUL.

#### **4. Truthful**

John says, “Little children let us NOT love in word and talk but in deed AND TRUTH. This is certainly one of the ways in which Christian love is most distinguishable from worldly love. Love in the world often means not telling the truth. Telling the truth in the world is often thought of as hate – but inside the family of God there is no definition of love that does not include telling the truth. In fact in the famous “love your neighbour as yourself” verse – if you zoom out and read the whole teaching you see this. Leviticus 19:17-18 says:

You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:17–18 NKJV)



According to the Bible loving people necessarily includes telling them the truth. You can really see that on display in Acts 20. The Apostle Paul spent more time with the church in Ephesus than with any of the other churches that he planted. He was there in Ephesus for more than 2 and a half years and he really fell in love with those people. When he was on his way to Jerusalem where he knew there was a good chance that he would be arrested and killed he called the elders of the church to him so that he could say his final goodbyes. It is a very touching scene. He says to them:

I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. (Acts 20:25–31 ESV)

I loved you enough to tell you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth but I know that not everyone who comes after me will love enough to do the same. So be alert, pay attention and remember how I admonished every one of you with tears.

Are you hearing that? Love in this family involves truth with tears. There is no such thing as loving people too much to tell them the truth. That's loving yourself too much. That's loving goodwill too much. That's worldly love - Paul had no time for it. He loved his people by telling them the truth because that's how we do it in the household of God. Real Christians speak the truth in love.

Now before we wrap this up we need to point ourselves somewhere. We've got ourselves all wound up and ready to love and now we need to be pointed in a particular direction. So that's our last question: who ought we to love in this particular manner?

### **Who Do We Love This Way?**

I think there are two answers to that question. The first one I think is pretty obvious; I think we'd have to say that a real Christian loves everyone – even those who hate us.

#### **1. Everyone (even those who hate us!)**

The famous parable of the Good Samaritan seems to be making that very point. We have to love WIDER than family and tribe and culture and language. The message of the Good Samaritan story is that real love reaches out to absolutely ANYONE IN NEED. If you see a need MEET THE NEED. If you see a person hurting and it is within your power to help THEN BY ALL MEANS DO SO. They don't have to believe what we believe in order for us to behave towards them as Jesus Christ. We can love and serve people indiscriminately.

That's the point of the parable – that's love the Jesus Way.

And again, according to Jesus this sort of love should extend even to people who hate us and who are persecuting us. He said:

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:44–45 ESV)

Are you seeing that? That's the same thing John said – this is probably where he got it from – Jesus is saying here that love like this displays the family likeness.

So Christian love reaches way out – we love EVERYONE. But the second thing we have to say is this: we love each other most of all.

## 2. **One another most of all**

That's really the point that John is making in this passage. Look at the actual words of the text. Look at verse 11:

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another**. (1 John 3:11 ESV)

Look at verses 16 and 17 – notice how many times he uses the word brother. This is about brother love not neighbour love. Neighbour love is a thing – we just talked about that – ENEMY LOVE is a thing we talked about that too – but the emphasis here is on brother love. Love for the body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul was equally clear here. He said:

let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10 ESV)

That's it in a nutshell. We love EVERYBODY! And ESPECIALLY the household of faith.

We reach as far as our enemies but we go deepest and widest in here.

That's what Jesus said to do. He said:

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”  
(John 13:35 ESV)

Your love for neighbours might get noticed but then again many unbelievers love their neighbours too. Your love for enemies will be thought of as weird but people don't tend to notice the virtues in those they are persecuting.

But your love for another?

Hmm. If you do it right, that'll preach. That will tell the world that you are my disciples.

And it will tell you that too.

I mentioned that John's purpose in sharing this was to assure these people that they were in fact true believers in Jesus Christ. They had been shaken by a church split and by the mean spirited things that some folks had said to them on the way out. So John is showing them their family likeness. He is saying: you have to be real sons and daughters! For crying out loud you look just like dear old dad.

That was his purpose in the text and it has been my joy in the text. That wasn't my intention originally. My intention was to walk through this passage because it described a characteristic Christian behaviour. I wasn't aiming for assurance but it has been my joy to discover it because everything he commends in them I see in you. You do not love each other in word and talk, you

love each other in DEED and in TRUTH. You are generous with each other and you make sacrifices in order to serve and care for one another.

I've seen so much of that in just the past few weeks. I saw it at the wedding of Alex and Michael Van Kessel.

I saw that at the passing of our dear brother Bill Wright.

I saw that last Sunday when folks who worshipped here went down to RCC to serve in Children's Ministry.

I saw it every day last week when you showed up and gave of your time, talent and dignity to serve our kids at VBS.

You look a lot like dear old dad.

I'm not saying that we're perfect I'm just saying that you ought be encouraged. Because according to John this is the family likeness; this is the basis of Christian assurance and this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, let's pray together.