

**Real Love  
Practice Love  
1 John 3:14 - 23**

**Big Idea – Real love is an action not a feeling.**

1 John 3:14 We know we have left death and have come into life because we love each other. Whoever does not love is still dead.

15 Everyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderers have eternal life in them.

16 This is how we know what real love is: Jesus gave his life for us. So we should give our lives for our brothers and sisters.

17 Suppose someone has enough to live and sees a brother or sister in need, but does not help. Then God's love is not living in that person.

18 My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring.

19 This is the way we know that we belong to the way of truth.

20 When our hearts make us feel guilty, we can still have peace before God. God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

21 My dear friends, if our hearts do not make us feel guilty, we can come without fear into God's presence.

22 And God gives us what we ask for because we obey God's commands and do what pleases him.

23 This is what God commands: that we believe in his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love each other, just as he commanded.

24 The people who obey God's commands live in God, and God lives in them. We know that God lives in us because of the Spirit God gave us.

**What does the Bible mean by love?**

3 types:

Eros – physical

Phileo – brotherly

Agape – divine, the love that only comes from God

It's a selfless love rooted in the very being of God.

It's a love whose fundamental attribute is that of sacrifice.

It's a love by the ACT OF THE WILL, not just a feeling.

It's a love that loves regardless of the attraction of the object or of its ability to love back.  
It's a love that is persistent, passionate, impartial, inexhaustible, unconditional and everlasting.

It is interesting to note this Greek word "Agape" is used some fifty-one times in the book of I John.

### **Real love shows we have new life in Christ – vs. 14**

“We know we have left death and have come into life because we love each other. Whoever does not love is still dead.” 1 John 3:14

“A new commandment I give to you,” Jesus said, “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).

16 times in the New Testament we are admonished to "Love one another."

At least 55 times in the New Testament we are commanded to love. It is one of the scripture's most repeated, inescapable directives for the believer. It touches us in all of our relationships and effects us in each of the many roles we play, as parents, spouses, children, friends, and fellow believers.

### **Real love does not practice hatred – vs. 15**

“Everyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderers have eternal life in them.” 1 John 3:15

The issue here is not whether a murderer can become a Christian, but whether a man can continue being a murderer and still be a Christian. The answer is no. "And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15).

The murderer did not once have eternal life and then lose it; he never had eternal life at all.

The fact that you have never actually murdered anyone should not make you proud or complacent. Have you ever harbored hatred in your heart?

Hatred does the hater far more damage than it does anyone else (Matt. 5:21-26). Jesus said that anger put a man in danger of facing the local court. Calling a brother an "empty-headed fool" put him in danger of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council. But calling him a "cursed fool" put him in danger of eternal judgment in hell. Hatred that is not confessed and forsaken actually puts a man into a spiritual and emotional prison! (Matthew 5:25)

The antidote for hatred is love. "Hateful and hating one another" is the normal experience of an unsaved person according to Titus 3:3. But when a hateful heart opens to Jesus Christ, it becomes a loving heart. Then instead of wanting to "murder" others through hatred, he wants to love them and share with them the message of eternal life.

Evangelist John Wesley was stopped one night by a highwayman who robbed the Methodist leader of all his money. Wesley said to the man, "If the day should come that you desire to leave this evil way and live for God, remember that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.'"

Some years later, Wesley was stopped by a man after a church service. "Do you remember me?" the man asked. "I robbed you one night, and you told me that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. I have trusted Christ, and He has changed my life."

### **Real love gives like Jesus gave – vs. 16**

"This is how we know what real love is: Jesus gave his life for us. So we should give our lives for our brothers and sisters." 1 John 3:16

Christ did not simply talk about His love; He died to prove it (Rom. 5:6-10). Jesus was not killed as a martyr; He willingly laid down His life (John 10:11-18; 15:13).

"Self-preservation" is the first law of physical life, but "self-sacrifice" is the first law of spiritual life.

### **Involves sacrifice and service**

But God does not ask us to lay down our lives. He simply asks us to help a brother in need. John wisely turns from "the brethren" in 1 John 3:16 to the singular, "his brother," in 1 John 3:17.

## **Real love is personal and active – vs. 17**

“Suppose someone has enough to live and sees a brother or sister in need but does not help. Then God’s love is not living in that person.” 1 John 3:17

If **I am going to help my brother, I must meet three conditions**. First, I must have the means necessary to meet his need. Second, I must know that the need exists. Third, I must be loving enough to want to share.

A believer who is too poor to help, or who is ignorant of his brother's need, is not condemned. But a believer who hardens his heart against his needy brother is condemned. One reason Christians should work is so that they may be able "to give to him that needs" (Eph. 4:28).

In these days of multiplied social agencies, it is easy for Christians to forget their obligations.

"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10,

This "doing good" doesn't have to be money or material supplies. It might include time in personal service and the giving of oneself to others. There are many individuals in our churches who lack love and would welcome friendship.

**Personal Illustration:** A young mother admitted, in a testimony meeting, that she never seemed to find time for her own personal devotions. She had several little children to care for, and the hours melted away.

Imagine her surprise when two of the ladies from the church appeared at her front door.

"We've come to take over," they explained. "You go into the bedroom and get started on your devotions." After several days of this kind of help, the young mother was able to develop her devotional life so that the daily demands on her time no longer upset her.

If we want to experience and enjoy the love of God in our own hearts, we must love others, even to the point of sacrifice. Being indifferent to a brother's needs means robbing ourselves of what we need even more: the love of God in our hearts. It is a matter of love or death!

## **Real love is in deed and in truth – vs. 18**

“My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring.” 1 John 3:18

The opposite of "in deed" is "in word," and the opposite of "in truth" is "in tongue." Here is an example of love "in word":

"If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled'; and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" (James 2:15-16)

To love "in word" means simply to talk about a need, but to love "in deed" means to do something about meeting it. You may think, because you have discussed a need, or even prayed about it, that you have done your duty, but love involves more than words—it calls for sacrificial deeds.

To love "in tongue" is the opposite of to love "in truth." It means to love insincerely. To love "in truth" means to love a person genuinely, from the heart and not just from the tongue.

People are attracted by genuine love, but repelled by the artificial variety. One reason why sinners were attracted to Jesus (Luke 15:1-2) was because they were sure He loved them sincerely.

"But does it not cost a great deal for the believer to exercise this kind of love?" Yes, it does. It cost Jesus Christ His life. But the wonderful benefits that come to you as by-products of this love more than compensate for any sacrifice you make. To be sure, you do not love others because you want to get something in return, but the Bible principle, "Give and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38), applies to love as well as to money.

### **Real love produces:**

#### **Assurance – vs. 19 - 21**

19 “This is the way we know that we belong to the way of truth.

20 When our hearts make us feel guilty, we can still have peace before God.

God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

21 My dear friends, if our hearts do not make us feel guilty, we can come without fear into God’s presence.” 1 John 3:19 - 21

A Christian who practices love grows in his understanding of God's truth and enjoys a heart filled with confidence before God.

A "condemning heart" is one that robs a believer of peace. An "accusing conscience" is another way to describe it. Sometimes the heart accuses us wrongly, because it "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9) The answer to that question is, "God knows the heart!"

More than one Christian has accused himself falsely, or been harder on himself than necessary; but God will never make such a mistake. A Christian who walks in love has a heart open to God ("God is love") and knows that God never judges wrongly.

John may have remembered two incidents from Jesus' life on earth that illustrate this important principle. When Jesus visited Bethany, He stayed at the home of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Martha was busy preparing the meal, but Mary sat at His feet and listened to Him teach. Martha criticized both Mary and Jesus, but Jesus knew Mary's heart and defended her.

The Apostle Peter wept bitterly after he had denied his Lord, and no doubt he was filled with remorse and repentance for his sin. But Jesus knew that Peter had repented, and after His resurrection the Lord sent a special message (Mark 16:7) to Peter that must have assured the hot-headed fisherman that he was forgiven. Peter's heart may have condemned him, for he knew he had denied the Lord three times, but God was greater than his heart. Jesus, knowing all things, gave Peter just the assurance he needed.

Be careful lest the devil accuse you and rob you of your confidence (Rev. 12:10). Once you confess your sin and it is forgiven, you need not allow it to accuse you anymore. Peter was able to face the Jews and say, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just!" (Acts 3:14) because his own sin of denying Christ had been taken care of and was forgiven and forgotten.

No Christian should treat sin lightly, but no Christian should be harder on himself than God is. There is a morbid kind of self-examination and self-condemnation that is not spiritual. If you are practicing genuine love for the brethren, your heart must be right before God, for the Holy Spirit would not "shed abroad" His love in you if there were habitual sin in your heart. When you grieve the Spirit, you "turn off the supply of God's love (Eph. 4:30-5:2).

### **Answered prayers – vs. 22**

“And God gives us what we ask for because we obey God’s commands and do what pleases him. “ 1 John 3:22

Love for the brethren produces confidence toward God, and confidence toward God gives you boldness in asking for what you need. This does not mean that you earn answers to prayer by loving the brethren. Rather, it means that your love for the brethren proves that you are living in the will of God where God can answer your prayer.

Love is the fulfilling of God's Law (Rom. 13:8-10); therefore, when you love the brethren, you are obeying His commandments and He is able to answer your requests.

A believer's relationship to the brethren cannot be divorced from his prayer life. If husbands and wives are not obeying God's Word, for example, their prayers will be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

An evangelist had preached on the Christian home. After the meeting a father approached him.

"I've been praying for a wayward son for years," said the father, "and God has not answered my prayers."

The evangelist read Psalm 66:18—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

"Be honest with yourself and the Lord," he said. "Is there anything between you and another Christian that needs to be settled?"

The father hesitated, then said, "Yes, I'm afraid there is. I've harbored resentment in my heart against another man in this church."

"Then go make it right," counseled the evangelist, and he prayed with the man. Before the campaign was over, the father saw his wayward son come back to the Lord.

These verses do not, of course, give us all the conditions for answered prayer, but they emphasize the importance of obedience.

One great secret of answered prayer is obedience, and the secret of obedience is love. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.... If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love" (John 15:7, 10).

### **Abiding – vs. 23, 24**

23 "This is what God commands: that we believe in his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love each other, just as he commanded.

24 The people who obey God's commands live in God, and God lives in them.

We know that God lives in us because of the Spirit God gave us." 1 John 3:23, 24

Faith toward God and love toward men are two sides of the same coin. It is easy to emphasize faith—correct doctrine—and to neglect love. On the other hand, some say doctrine is not important and that love is our main responsibility.

Both doctrine and love are important. When a person is justified by faith, he should know that the love of God is being shed abroad in his heart (Rom. 5:1-5).

"Abiding in Christ" is a key experience for a believer who wants to have confidence toward God and enjoy answers to prayer. Jesus, in His message to the disciples in the Upper Room (John 15:1-14) illustrated "abiding."

He compared His followers to the branches of a vine. So long as the branch draws its strength from the vine, it produces fruit. But if it separates itself from the vine, it withers and dies.

Jesus was not talking about salvation; He was talking about fruit-bearing. The instant a sinner trusts Christ, he enters into union with Christ; but maintaining communion is a moment-by-moment responsibility. Abiding depends on our obeying His Word and keeping clean (John 15:3, 10).

As we have seen, when a believer walks in love, he finds it easy to obey God, and therefore he maintains a close communion with God. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23).

The Holy Spirit is mentioned by name in 1 John for the first time in 3:24.

But the Holy One is also the abiding Spirit (1 John 3:24; 4:13). When a believer obeys God and loves the brethren, the indwelling Holy Spirit gives him peace and confidence.

To abide in love is to abide in God, and to abide in God is to abide in love. Christian love is not something we "work up" when we need it. Christian love is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit," and this is your constant experience as you abide in Christ.

There are four levels on which a person may live.



He may choose the lowest level—Satan's level—and practice murder. Murderers "have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Or, a person may choose the next level—hatred. But hatred, in God's sight, is the same as murder. A man who lives with hatred is slowly killing himself, not the other person! Psychiatrists warn that malice and hatred cause all kinds of physical and emotional problems. In fact, one specialist has entitled his book *Love or Perish!*

The third level—indifference—is far better than the first two, because the first two are not Christian at all. A man who has constant hatred in his heart, or who habitually murders, proves he has never been born of God. But it is possible to be a Christian and be indifferent to the needs of others.

A man who murders belongs to the devil, like Cain. A man who hates belongs to the world (1 John 3:13), which is under Satan's control. But a Christian who is indifferent is living for the flesh, which serves Satan's purposes.

The only happy, holy way to live is on the highest level, the level of Christian love. This is the life of joy and liberty, the life of answered prayer. It assures you confidence and courage in spite of the difficulties of life.

Dr. Rene Spitz of New York made a study of children in foundling homes to determine what effect love and neglect had on them. The survey proved that children who were neglected and unloved were much slower in their development, and some of them even died.

Even in a physical sense, love is the very atmosphere of life and growth. It is even more so in the spiritual sense.