

# Small Group Guide – Love in Action

## The Real Thing: Week 6

*1 John 3:11-24*

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### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Encourage group members to pre-read 1 John 3:11-24. Open your time together in prayer, asking God to move the truths of this passage from your heads into your hearts and hands.

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### SERMON OVERVIEW

This week, we explored what genuine, Christ-centered love looks like in the lives of those who have received new life from God. Three main truths anchored the message:

1. Love reveals new life
2. Love looks like Jesus
3. Love reassures our hearts

The central thread throughout was this: love does not create new life in us, but love reveals that new life is present. The real thing is not love in theory. The real thing is love in action.

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### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The command to love one another is not optional for followers of Christ. It is a defining mark of belonging to God's family.
  - Hatred, like Cain's toward Abel, is not simply an emotion. It is a spiritual condition that reveals the absence of God's life in a person.
  - Jesus is the definition - the standard of love. He did not love from a distance or with words alone. He gave His life.
  - Genuine love is practical and visible. It responds to real needs with real action.
  - When our hearts condemn us, God's verdict is greater than our feelings. Our assurance rests in Christ, not in our performance.
  - Faith and love are inseparable. We do not love our way into God's family, but the faith that receives Christ begins producing the love of Christ.
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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### OPENING

1. What is one way someone has shown you love through action rather than words?  
How did that experience affect you?
  2. The sermon opened with the idea that actions speak louder than words, especially regarding love. Where do you see that most clearly in your own relationships?
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### **SECTION 1: Love Reveals New Life (1 John 3:11-15)**

3. The sermon described how, before Christ, we naturally live with ourselves at the center. In what ways have you noticed God beginning to shift your focus outward toward others since coming to faith?
  4. John uses the story of Cain and Abel to illustrate how a righteous life can provoke hatred in others. Have you ever experienced opposition or rejection simply because of your faith? How did you respond?
  5. The sermon drew a distinction between persecution for faithful living and consequences for poor behavior. Why is that distinction important for how we represent Christ in the world?
  6. John warns that hatred is essentially murder growing in the heart. The sermon acknowledged that deep wounds sometimes require hard and lengthy work toward forgiveness. What makes forgiveness especially difficult, and what has helped you move through that process?
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### **SECTION 2: Love Looks Like Jesus (1 John 3:16-18)**

7. The sermon said that love is not measured merely by the depth of our feelings, but by the extent of our sacrifice. How does that definition challenge the way our culture typically talks about love?
  8. The sermon listed several practical ways we lay down our lives for others, including surrendering our time, comfort, preferences, pride, and desire to be noticed. Which of these is most difficult for you personally, and why?
  9. In 1 John 3:17, John describes someone who sees a genuine need, has the ability to help, and deliberately closes his heart. The sermon noted that we cannot meet every need, but the issue is whether love moves us to do something. How do you personally navigate the tension between wise boundaries and a compassionate response?
  10. The sermon challenged us not to compare our love to the love of others but to hold it up against the love of Jesus. How does that higher standard change the way you evaluate your own love for others?
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### **SECTION 3: Love Reassures Our Hearts (1 John 3:19-24)**

11. The sermon described two ways our hearts can mislead us: excusing what God condemns or condemning what God has already forgiven. Which tendency do you find yourself more prone to, and how does the gospel speak to that tendency?

12. The sermon made this statement: "The presence of the struggle does not mean the absence of spiritual life. In fact, our grief over sin can be evidence that God has made our hearts sensitive to Him." How does that reframe the way you think about your own spiritual doubts or failures?
13. John says our confidence in prayer grows as our desires come into alignment with God's desires. How has your obedience shaped what you ask for in prayer over time?
14. The sermon described the Spirit's role as testifying with our spirit that we are children of God. Have you experienced that reassurance from the Holy Spirit? What did it look like for you?
15. The sermon closed by asking whether the evidence of spiritual life is present, even if imperfect, and reminded us that a small flame is still a flame and a weak faith can still rest in a strong Savior. How does that encouragement speak to where you are right now in your walk with God?

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## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Work through these individually or discuss as a group. Choose one or two to act on before your next gathering.

**Examine Your Heart** Spend time in quiet prayer this week asking God to reveal any bitterness, resentment, or unresolved conflict you may be carrying. Confess it honestly and ask the Holy Spirit to replace it with a genuine desire for the other person's good.

**Identify a Need** Think of one person in your church, neighborhood, or workplace who has a visible need. Commit to a specific, practical act of love toward that person this week. Do not wait until the moment feels right. Take a step.

**Pray for Someone Who Has Hurt You** If there is someone whose failure or offense you have been quietly replaying, begin praying for that person daily this week. Ask God to bless them, work in their life, and soften your own heart toward them.

**Evaluate Your Prayers** Review the pattern of your prayer life. Are you asking God to bless what you have already decided, or are you genuinely seeking His will? Ask God to align your desires with His.

**Rest in God's Verdict** If you have been allowing past sin or failure to create distance between you and God, write out Romans 8:1 and place it somewhere you will see it daily. Let it remind you that God's verdict is greater than your feelings.

**Initiate a Difficult Conversation** If there is a relationship where conflict has gone unaddressed, ask God for the courage and grace to initiate a conversation that seeks reconciliation. Go with the goal of the other person's good, not of winning the argument.

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## **CLOSING REFLECTION**

Before closing in prayer, give each group member a moment to answer this question silently or aloud:

Based on this passage and today's discussion, what is one specific way God is calling your love to become more visible this week?

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## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Close by praying together as a group. You may want to pray through these areas:

- Gratitude for the love Christ demonstrated on the cross
  - Confession of ways love has remained only in words
  - Surrender of bitterness, resentment, or closed hearts
  - Boldness to approach God with confidence through Christ
  - Specific needs within your group and community
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*Series: The Real Thing | 1 John Week 6 of ongoing series*