

Wednesday Night Yard Teaching Guide: 1 John 3:11–4:6

[3:11] 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.

[19] By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; [20] for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. [21] Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; [22] and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. [23] And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. [24] Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

[4:1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. [4] Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. [5] They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. [6] We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Main Idea

A truly Christian life is one of faith and love; a truly Christian teaching is one that accords with God's word

Outline

- I. A Truly Christian Life (3:11-24)
 - A. What does a truly Christian life look like?
 1. A truly Christian life is not just moralism (doing good deeds)
 2. A truly Christian life is not just intellectual assent (believing the right things)
 3. A truly Christian life is characterized by “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6)
 - B. A truly Christian life is marked by faith and love because God’s own life abides in us
 1. See 1 John 3:23-24
 2. The source of obedience to God’s commandments is God’s Spirit abiding in us
 3. We should strive to live in faith (believing in the name of God’s Son, Jesus Christ) and love for our brothers and sisters
 - C. What does it mean to love?
 1. True love is defined by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (1 John 3:16)
 2. In our culture, to love someone means to let them do anything they want.
 3. The essence of Christ’s love for us was to save us from running headlong into sin and misery. He redeems us from evil so that we can pursue good. His love isn’t permission to do anything; his love sets us on the course for good, and ultimately for God.
 4. The cross defines love. Our practice of love should accord with the cross.
 - a) Christ’s love was sacrificial and oriented to others
 - b) John’s application: give to those in need (1 John 3:17)
 - c) How can we practice Christ’s love toward our brothers and sisters in the youth group? One way is to welcome those who don’t have many friends.
- II. A Truly Christian Teaching (4:1-6)
 - A. Lots of people claim to teach authoritatively about Jesus (including me!). We need to know how to tell who is telling the truth and who is lying.
 - B. John gives a straightforward test (1 John 4:2-3)
 - C. The word of God is the source of all truth
 - D. To those who are perplexed and confused, John offers comfort: in Christ, you will overcome the world, including those who seek to lead you astray and confuse you (1 John 4:4-5)
 - E. Consider a few things you can make regular habits as you seek to discern the truth:
 1. Persevere in prayer and search the Scriptures
 2. Talk with your parents and believing friends about your questions
 3. Don’t forget about the true Christian life of faith and love. Seek to live this life daily.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways are you struggling to know what's true and false? What challenges to your deepest convictions do you experience?
2. What is a truly Christian life? Can you think of anyone who models this kind of life? What about their character and conduct reminds you of the true Christian life?
3. How can you live out a life of faith and love amongst your family? Your school? Your youth group? Your church? Your neighborhood?
4. What is a truly Christian teaching? Which teachings and teachers are vying for authority in your life? How do they stick with or depart from a truly Christian teaching?
5. Do you trust God's word? What makes it hard/easy to trust? Does it shed light on the area(s) in which you're struggling to discern true and false?