

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“Love Sacrifices Self”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 1 John 3:11-18; John 13:34-35; 15:12-13; 3:19-21; 7:1-7; 15:18-20; 5:24; 13:30; 8:44; 10:11; 1 Jn. 2:5-6; 2:15-17; Gen. 2:17; 3:4-5; 4:1-8; Jude 11.

It is easy to say, “I love you.” It is harder to let love cost us something. Most of us know what it is to love in words, in good intentions, in feelings, in things we meant to do but never actually did. But John will not let love stay in the realm of sentiment. He brings love down into the daily stuff of life—our time, our resources, our priorities, our willingness to open our hearts when it would be easier to close them.

John has already told us to look at the amazing love the Father has given us, that we should be called God's children—and so we are. Now he shows us what the family resemblance looks like. If we are born of God, if we are walking in the light as He is in the light, then the life of Yeshua begins to take shape in us. And the life of Yeshua is not self-protective, self-exalting, or self-serving. The life of Yeshua lays itself down. Love sacrifices self.

1. Love One Another, and Do Not Walk in the Way of Cain

John begins plainly: *“For this is the message you have heard from the beginning—we should love one another”* (1 Jn. 3:11). This is not new information. This is the message from the beginning. Yeshua Himself said, *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you must love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (Jn. 13:34-35). The command is not merely that we love, but that we love as He has loved us. We walk as He walked. We love what He loves, in the way that He loves.

Then John gives the counterexample: *“Do not be like Cain, who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, while his brother's were righteous”* (1 Jn. 3:12). Cain and Abel were brothers, but they did not have the same character. Cain's behavior toward his brother revealed the condition of his heart. He resented Abel's righteousness. He hated the light that exposed him. And John says, do not be like Cain. Do not let envy, resentment, pride, or hatred rule your heart toward your brother or sister. That way belongs to darkness. The way of Yeshua is the way of love.

2. LOVE REVEALS THAT WE HAVE PASSED FROM DEATH TO LIFE

John continues, *“Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you”* (1 Jn. 3:13). Cain represents the world's attitude toward the light. Yeshua said, *“Now this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world and men loved the darkness instead of the light, because their deeds were evil”* (Jn. 3:19). The world does not hate believers simply

because they use religious language. The world hates the life of Yeshua when it sees Him in us—when we come into the light, and when we begin to walk in His ways, because the light shining forth from us reveals what is hidden in the dark and stands in stark contrast to it.

But here is the evidence that something has truly happened in us: *“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death”* (1 Jn. 3:14). Death is not only a future event; it is the realm into which sin has brought humanity. The failure to love belongs to that realm. Hatred belongs to darkness. So John speaks strongly: *“Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer—and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”* (1 Jn. 3:15). Hate destroys. Lies destroy. Misrepresenting God by word or by example pulls people away from life. But love is the evidence that we have passed out of death and into life.

3. LOVE LAYS DOWN ITS LIFE IN DEED AND TRUTH

John now shows us what love is: *“We have come to know love by this—Yeshua laid down His life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters”* (1 Jn. 3:16). We know love by looking at Him, at Yeshua—the One who laid down His life for us. He gave His life for our sake. And we ourselves ought to do the same for one another. Giving up your life for another is not simply about that hypothetical heroic moment when someone rushes into danger and dies for another. Sure, it includes that, but it is bigger than that. A shepherd lays down his life for the sheep not only by dying, but by spending his life caring for them, protecting them, feeding them, and keeping them alive.

That is why John immediately makes this practical: *“But if someone has material possessions and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”* (1 Jn. 3:17). If someone has the stuff of life, the resources for living, and sees his brother in need—sees the lack, the difficulty, the life-sustaining need—and shuts off his heart, how does God’s love remain in him? This brings us right back to what John already warned about: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world”* (1 Jn. 2:15). Do we love our cravings, our wants, our status, and our stuff more than we love what He loves? Love sacrifices self. Our time is our life. Our resources often represent the hours and strength we have spent making a living. When we share those resources to sustain another, we are laying down our lives in deed and truth.

CONCLUSION

John closes this section tenderly but directly: *“Children, let us not love with word or talk, but in deed and truth!”* (1 Jn. 3:18). Little children, do not let love remain only on your lips. Do not let it be only a feeling, a sentiment, a religious phrase, or a good intention. Love as He loves. Walk as He walked. Let the love of God be made complete in you—not merely by what you say, but by what you do, by the way you open your heart, by the way you see the needs of others and respond. Don’t just declare His love. Demonstrate it.

So the call today is not simply, “Do you say you love God?” The question is, “Is His love abiding in you?” Are there places where resentment, envy, or bitterness have made you more like Cain than like Yeshua? Are there places where you have seen a need and closed your heart? Today, come into the light. Bring Him your closed-off heart, your self-protection, your love of the world, your fear of being inconvenienced, and your desire to preserve yourself. Ask Him to form the family resemblance of Yeshua in you. Receive His mercy, and then rise to walk as He walked. Love one another—not with word or talk only, but in deed and truth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. John says the message from the beginning is that “we should love one another.” Why is love for one another such a central evidence of walking in the light?
2. Cain hated Abel because Abel’s righteousness exposed him. Where do we see that same kind of resentment toward righteousness in the world today, or even in our own hearts?
3. John says we know we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. How does this challenge the way people often define spiritual maturity?
4. In a modern, everyday sense, what are some ways we may “close our heart” when we see someone in need?
5. What would it look like this week for you to love not merely “with word or talk,” but “in deed and truth”?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, behold what amazing love You have given us, that we should be called Your children—and so we are. Thank You for loving us first. Thank You for sending Yeshua, who laid down His life for us and showed us what love truly is.

Lord, search our hearts. Expose every place where resentment, pride, selfishness, fear, or love of the world has kept us from loving as You love. Forgive us for the times we have loved only in word or talk while closing our hearts to real need.

Teach us to walk as Yeshua walked. Make us people who love in deed and truth. Open our eyes to see our brothers and sisters rightly, open our hearts to care deeply, and open our hands to give freely. Let Your love abide in us and be made visible through us.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.