

1 John 3:10-23

“Love in Deed”

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Intro. Are you your brother's keeper? What is your responsibility to neighbors where you live, work, study, play, and worship? What difference does it make? Let's discover together ...

Subject: The imperative of love

Object: Love in deed and in truth

1. Righteousness and love [10-15]

¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹² not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³ Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in

death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

The true child of God [1 Jn. 3:1,10] lives right with God by submitting to His will, and by loving others [10]. Those that don't yield to God's commands, or don't love are not children of God and are thus still under Satan's primary influence [10]. Righteousness without love is a religious obstacle to God, and love without righteousness obscures God, and thus unless both exist evil is present. Love and righteousness have been perfectly manifest and proclaimed by Jesus since the beginning [11, 1Jn. 2:7, Jn. 13:34].

A lack of love is equated with hatred, evil, murder, and reveals that a person is not truly in relationship with God [12-15]. Cain commits the first murder in the Bible, and the victim is his own brother Abel [12, Gen. 4]. Cain was jealous that God had rejected his offering and accepted Abel's. Cain rejected God's warning that his anger would dominate him, and he refused to repent. After the murder of Abel, God inquires of Cain about Abel's whereabouts, and Cain famously replies, "Am I my brother's keeper?" [Gen. 4:9]. How we respond to that inquiry reveals our relationship with God. The true child of God recognizes a special familial relationship and responsibility to other followers of Christ. Those who claim to follow Jesus can know whether they truly have life with God by their love for other believers [14]. Love is characterized by relationship,

and the nature of that relationship will be revealed in the verses that follow [16-23].

On the other hand, those that manifest hatred characterized by malice, wrath, rage, bitterness, indifference, apathy, selfishness and isolation are not likely in relationship with Christ [14-15].

John notes that Jesus' followers should not be surprised if the world hates them [13]. In the culture we live in, the mantra is "love and tolerance." However, when those touted values are challenged by the words and works of Jesus that reveal moral truth, and declare truth about God, the response is hatred not love nor tolerance. Undoubtedly, Jesus' followers will be scorned and mocked as Jesus was when He displayed perfect righteousness and love.

2. Faith and love [16-23]

¹⁶ By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. ²⁰ For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our

heart, and knows all things. ²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. ²² And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³ And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

We can know that type of love that reveals a life-giving relationship with God [16]. The Greeks had four words that we translate love. *Eros* relates to erotic or sexual love. *Storge* refers to familial love, especially between a parent and child. *Philia* speaks of brotherly affection. And the ultimate expression of love is *agape* a selfless love.

We can know love by considering the words and works of Jesus including His incarnation and death [16]. Jesus voluntarily leaves His heavenly dwelling and dwells with man in humility, and then gives His life as a perfect sacrifice once and for all so that you can live. Jesus' love is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional, unmerited, and committed. It transcends even the ideal of parental love, because it is given to us even when we were opposed to God [Rom. 5:8].

As followers of Jesus, *we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* [16]. The focus here is on our relationships with other believers, the brethren. We are to place the needs of others before our own desires [Ph.2:3-4]. Real love always involves a sacrifice.

Real faith produces love demonstrated by actions that prove love for God and neighbors [17-18].

If you have the ability to help, but you harden your heart to the needs of others, then God's love is not manifest in you [17]. Words without actions or deeds to prove them are often inadequate. While it is true that none of us can care for all needs, that reality does not justify us from neglecting meaningful acts of charity, kindness, and benevolence to neighbors where you live, work, study, play, and worship.

The gospel is the greatest display of love, and your love should point people to Jesus and His gospel. Demonstrating God's love provides assurance of your relationship with Christ so that you know you are of the truth [19]. Sometimes, our emotions of guilt, condemnation, or self-righteousness can be amiss. You may feel that you're not loving enough or feel that you are plenty loving. You can have confidence that God will reveal your condition with Him as you consider your love for Him and others [20-21].

Real faith impacts your prayer life [22]. Those that know Christ, seek to keep His commandments, and live to please God are likely to be making prayer requests to God that are consistent with His will and thus answered positively by God.

Real faith in Christ and love for neighbors fulfills God's commandment(s) [23, Jn. 20:31, Matt. 22:37-39, Jn. 15:12, Jn. 13:34-35]. We are called to

trust in Jesus and submit our lives to Him. Love for others is evidence of our faith in Christ.

Study Guide Qs

Q1 Why might righteousness without love be an obstacle to God?

Describe some examples.

Q2 Why might love without righteousness obscure God? Describe some examples.

Q3 What are some of the obstacles to developing meaningful relationships with other believers? What are you doing to overcome those obstacles? How have the changes impacted your life?

Q4 How would you like to apply the lessons of this study in your life in the coming year(s)?

Digging Deeper

1. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan [Lu. 10:25-37], the expert in the law tries to justify himself by asking, “Who is my neighbor?” In other words, “To whom do I owe a duty to love?” In the parable, Jesus portrays religious people avoiding the need, and a presumed non-religious person, a Samaritan, displaying love through sacrificial care

of the wounded Jewish traveler. The story would likely bring conviction to religious people who are so busy with religious activity that they neglect to truly love.

Read the passage, pray, reflect, and consider what changes God would have you make in your life.

2. Real faith and love change your prayers [22]. Spend time praying and considering how you can love God and neighbors better.