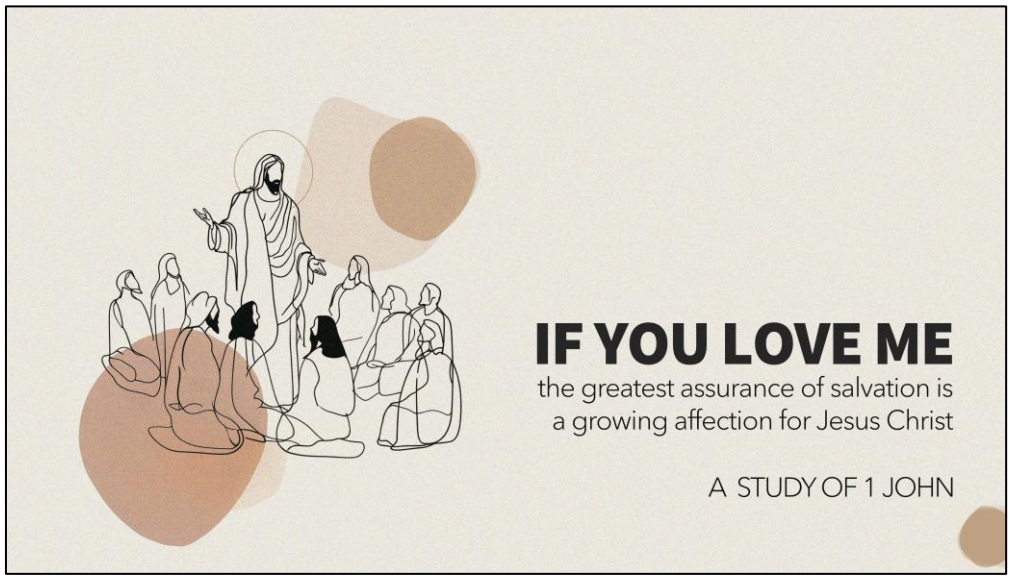


Love the Way I Love

1 John 3-4

Lake Arrowhead Church, Waleska, Georgia
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LOVE THE WAY I LOVE
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Emma Banes is a southern gal who takes a humorous look at life. Here's her take on marriage. **[VIDEO[1]]**

- *Marriage is like having a best friend who don't remember nothing you say.*
- *A good marriage is just two people taking turns being the problem.*
- *Marriage is mostly yelling "What?" from different rooms in the house.*
- *If you want to stay married, sometimes the best thing to do is just nod.*
- *Marriage is spending half your life looking for something the other person moved.*
- *Every married couple has that one story they both tell very differently.*
- *Marriage is when she asks what you want to eat and every answer you give is wrong.*
- *A strong marriage is when you're both mad, but you still ask if the other one wants something from the kitchen.*
- *Marriage is when somebody's always hot and somebody's always cold.*

This morning, we're going to talk about love, but not the romantic kind. We're not talking about giving flowers to your wife or being nice to your neighbor or loving people you already like. This morning, we're talking about when love is hard. Jesus calls us to love people that offend us and hurt us. He calls us to love and pray for our enemies. He expects us to love people we don't like. We tend to put limits on who and how we love, but His love has no limits. His kind of love is deeper and more demanding. According to Jesus, the defining characteristic of the Christian life is love.[2]

The Apostle John witnessed this love and wrote about this love because he knew Jesus up close and personal. He walked with Him. He heard every word and witnessed every miracle. In his own words, John said, "I've seen Him, I've heard Him, and even touched Him."

First John is a sequel to the Gospel of John. In this short letter, John explained the Gospel to a new generation. He also explained what Jesus meant when He said, "If you love Me …" John describes what it looks like to truly believe and to truly love Jesus Christ. And that's why 1 John can be summed up in this sentence. ***The greatest assurance of salvation, the greatest proof of salvation, is a growing affection for Jesus Christ, and a growing love and affection for others.***

Around the age of 90, and around the year of 90 AD, John wrote this to a new generation.

> "By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil – whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the

> beginning, that we should love one another. 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 … Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:10-12, 15, ESV).
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> "By this we know love, that Jesus laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 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? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:16-18, ESV).
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> "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God … Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another … And this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:7, 11, 21, ESV).

When John was too old to preach, he would be carried into the church on a stretcher and all he would say was, "Little children, love one another." And when asked why he always said the same thing, John replied, "This is the Lord's command. If we do this, it is enough."[3]

The greatest assurance of salvation, the greatest proof of salvation, is a growing affection for Jesus Christ, and a growing love and affection for others.[4]

THE CALL TO LOVE

"Beloved, if God so loved us," and oh how He has loved us, John wrote, "we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11, ESV).

I love God and I love my wife. I love college football and I love chocolate ice cream. Which proves love is one of the most broadly used words in the English language. It's used in so many contexts.

One of the most beautiful pictures of love is a wedding. As a pastor, I have the privilege of standing before a beautiful bride and a handsome groom, and usually read 1 Corinthians 13, the "love chapter." "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." Then I declare them husband and wife and say, "You may kiss the bride!" And everyone lives happily ever after. Well, not always.

All of us want great relationships. We want a great marriage, we want a loving family, we want close friends, and we want to work with nice people. The problem is that relationships can sour. Some of the most intense emotions we experience are when relationships go bad.

It could be your boss who demands too much and never acknowledges your hard work. It could be a trusted friend who lets you down. It could be your spouse, and you've had a big fight and you're mad. Perhaps there's conflict with one of your children, or your mother-in-law, or your

neighbor. Within your network of relationships, there are plenty of chances for things to go wrong, for relationships to sour, and to have something against someone else.

But Jesus refuses to let us settle for that. He said, "This is my commandment, love each other the same way I have loved you" (John 15:12, NLT).[5] Echoing Jesus, Paul said, "Walk in love, just as Christ loved you and gave Himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:2).[1] Peter said, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8, NAS). Again echoing Jesus, John said, "Let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:7-8, ESV).

We're not talking about romantic love or loving people we like. We're talking about when love is hard. Jesus calls us to love people that offend us and hurt us. He expects us to love people we don't like. He even said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44, ESV).

Jesus is serious about this. "This is my commandment, love each other the same way I have loved you" (John 15:12, NLT).

THE NEGATIVE EXAMPLE OF CAIN

John gave two examples in chapter 3. The positive example of Jesus and the negative example of Cain.

In 1 John 3, John shows us what happens when there is no love. "For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 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 were righteous" (1 John 3:11-12, ESV). John takes us to the scene of a homicide to teach us about love.

John recalled the story of Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve.[6] Cain was a farmer and gave part of his harvest as an offering to God. Abel was a shepherd and gave an animal as an offering to God. Each gave an offering from the fruit of their vocations. The Lord accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's.[7] Some say God rejected Cain's offering because it was not a blood sacrifice. That's unlikely since later in Israel's history, the Lord accepted grain and harvest offerings. So the issue was not what was offered, but how it was offered. The problem was Cain's heart.[8] The Lord gave him a second chance to offer a sincere sacrifice, but instead, he got angry with God. He resented that fact that God accepted his brother's offering. Cain was jealous. And jealousy escalated to resentment, hatred, and murder.

And that's why John said, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). When relationships sour, we don't commit murder, we just write people off and they are dead to us. When there is no love, there is jealousy, resentment, and hatred, and it all adds up to emotional murder.

When there is no love, bad things happen.

THE POSITIVE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

But that's not what Jesus wants for us. He said to His disciples, and He says to us, "This is my commandment, love each other the same way I have loved you" (John 15:12, NLT). "Love the way I love." So, how did Jesus love? John described three ways Jesus loved.

The first way was ***forgiveness***.[9] ***Love forgives***. John said, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15, ESV). John did not say that "everyone who *kills* his brother is a murderer," he said, "everyone who *hates* his brother is a murderer." John was repeating what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. "You have heard that it was said to people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Anyone who says to his brother, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell" (Matthew 5:21-22, NIV). Jesus equated the character of the one who hates with the character of the one who murders, and John repeated what he heard Jesus say years earlier. "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15, ESV).

The opposite of murder is forgiveness. And Jesus is certainly the best example of this. Nailed to the cross, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34, NAS). The cross is the ultimate act of forgiveness. Jesus has forgiven us of everything we've ever done wrong. So to love the way Jesus loved, we must forgive others the way Jesus has forgiven us.[10]

But we hesitate because it's not fair. But neither was God's grace. He did not give us what we deserved. He showered us with grace. And grace humbles us, softens us, and helps us forgive when it's not fair. Forgiven people forgive … over and over and over again.

The second way Jesus loved was through ***sacrifice***. ***Love sacrifices***. John said, "By this we know love, that (Jesus) laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 John 3:16, ESV). Years earlier, John heard Jesus say, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, NAS).[11] Jesus extended His arms on the cross and sacrificed His life for us. That's how far His love was willing to go.

But what does it mean for us to "lay down our lives" for each other? What does sacrifice mean in our relationships? By definition, sacrifice is giving up something of value for the sake of someone else. Sacrifice is our loss for someone else's benefit. Sacrifice costs something. But it's a price we're willing to pay when we really love someone. As Jesus dramatically showed on the cross, love sacrifices.

A third way Jesus loved was with ***compassion***. "Seeing the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36, NAS). ***Love cares***. To love the way Jesus loved, John said, "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? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18, ESV).[12]

When Jesus said, "Love your neighbor," He defined that neighbor in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

> "As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, some robbers attacked him. They tore off his clothes, beat him, and left him lying there, almost dead. It happened that a Jewish priest was going down that road. When he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. Next, a Levite (*another religious man*) went over and looked at the man, and he walked by on the other side of the road."
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> "Then a Samaritan traveling down the road … saw the man, (and) he felt very sorry for him (*there was racial conflict between Jews and Samaritans, so it was surprising that a Samaritan stopped to help, two Jewish religious men refused to help one of their own, but the Samaritan's compassion led him to cross the racial divide and help*). The Samaritan … poured olive oil and wine on his wounds, and bandaged them. Then he put the hurt man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he cared for him. The next day, the Samaritan brought out two coins, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of this man. If you spend more money on him, I will pay it back to you when I come again.'"
>
> Then Jesus said, "Which one of these three men do you think was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by the robbers?" The expert on the law answered, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Then go and do what he did" (Luke 10:30-37, NCV).

Who is your neighbor? Anyone who at any time needs help. If anyone at any time needs help, then help them.

In the parable, two men refused to help. They were too busy. We know what that's like. Too often, we're too busy to be interrupted or too selfish to be inconvenienced. And besides, a woman shouldn't stop to help a car broken down on the side of the road, that's dangerous. And we shouldn't give money to a homeless guy who will just get drunk. There are a thousand reasons not to stop and help. But the Samaritan became the "Good Samaritan" because he was willing to stop and help.

How did Jesus love? Love forgives. Love sacrifices. Love cares.

- Love sees and notices.
- Love looks in the eye and listens.
- Love gives and love serves.
- Love is moved by the needs and hurts of other people. Love cannot remain indifferent or passive.
- Love takes the initiative. Love is willing to be interrupted and willing to be inconvenienced.
- Love asks, "How are you really doing?"
- Love reaches out, love reaches down, and love raises up.
- As we see in Jesus, love forgives, love sacrifices, love cares.

I was thinking of a way to summarize love, and here's what I came up with. **LOVE = YOU > ME**. As Philippians 2 says, "Do not love out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4, NAS). Love is when you are greater than me.

LOVE THE WAY I LOVE

But why? Why love? Why sacrifice? Why care? John answered that in chapter 4. "Let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God … We love because he first loved us … And this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:7, 19, 21, ESV).

What does love look like in real life? I want to answer that with the handout you received this morning. The answer is in the "one another" verses of the New Testament. I encourage you to spend some time alone with God and walk through these "one another" verses and allow the Holy Spirit to show you how you need grow in your love for others. What does love look like in real life?

- "love one another, even as I have loved you, you also love one another" (John 13:34)
- "do not judge one another" (Romans 14:13)
- "serve one another" (Galatians 5:13)
- "be patient, bearing with one another" (Ephesians 4:2)
- "be kind to one another" (Ephesians 4:32)
- "forgive one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32)
- "comfort one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- "encourage one another, and build one another up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- "live in peace with one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:13)
- "pray for one another" (James 5:16).

This is what life is supposed to look like for those who know and love Jesus. This is what the church is supposed to look like. This is what family is supposed to look like. This is what marriage is supposed to look like. Do you hear Jesus? ***"Love the way I love."***

CONCLUSION

I want to challenge you with two words – **WHO** and **HOW**. WHO is God telling you to love and HOW can you love them better? How can you love your spouse better? How can you love your children better? How can you love your neighbor better? How can you love your friends better? How can you love someone who hurt you? How can you love someone who irritates you?

WHO *and* HOW? *Who is God telling you to love and how can you love them better?*[13]

NOTES

[1] Link to Emma Banes' funny video on marriage – https://www.tiktok.com/@ezsnb/video/7615253929982430478.
[2] See 1 Corinthians 13:13, of all Christian virtues, the Bible says, "The greatest of these is love."
[3] John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), page 53.
[4] As one commentator put it, "A person cannot come into a real relationship with a loving God without becoming a loving person." Quote by I. Howard Marshall, in David Jackman, *The Message of John's Letters*, The Bible Speaks Today Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), page 98.
[5] Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39, ESV). He said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, 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, NAS).
[6] See Genesis 4. In one of the last books in the Bible, John referred back to Genesis, to the first book in the Bible. By mentioning Cain and Abel, John was confirming that they were real people, also confirming the historicity of the Old Testament.
[7] See Hebrews 11:4.
[8] See Jude 11-13, 1 John 3:12.
[9] Peter often asked the questions no one else dared to ask. This is one of them. Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" We wonder the same thing. How much do we have to forgive? But here's what Jesus said. "Not seven times, but seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). The rabbis taught that a person was required to forgive three times. Beyond that, there was no obligation to forgive. This came from their interpretation of what the Lord said to the prophet Amos. "For three transgressions (I will forgive) … (but) for four I will not hold back My punishment." The rabbis took this to mean that even God had His limits. He will forgive you three times but watch out on the fourth! They taught there was a limit to forgiveness. We should not be required to forgive more than God, right? Peter tried to show that he had a bigger heart than the rabbis. So he offered to forgive not just three times, but up to seven times. Expecting to be commended, instead Jesus said, "No Peter. Not seven times, but seventy times seven!" Peter and the disciples were stunned. Did Jesus really expect them to forgive that much? Yes. Peter was thinking the same thing we're thinking. "But wait a minute, Lord. You don't understand my situation … You don't know how bad it was … You don't know what he did to me!" It doesn't matter. Jesus died on the cross for every sin, great and small. He paid the penalty for every sin, great and small. And He expects us to do the same. But it's so hard to do. Why is it hard to forgive?

- "Because I don't respect him, and I certainly don't trust him. So how can I forgive him?"
- "Because I don't want to be nice to him after what he did to me."
- "Because I hope I never see that person again as long as I live."
- "Because he doesn't deserve my forgiveness."
- "To forgive her would be like it never happened. But it did happen!"
- "To forgive him is to act like it didn't hurt. But it did hurt."
- "Because he hasn't even thought about apologizing."
- "Because I want justice. I want her to suffer the same way she made me suffer."
- "I have to stand up for myself. Forgiving him would be letting him run all over me."
- "Because it's just not fair!"

Neither was God's grace. He gave us what we did not deserve. And that's why we forgive others. His grace humbles us, softens us, and helps us forgive when it's not fair. Forgiven people forgive … over and over and over again.
[10] Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (NAS). And in Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus said, "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins" (NLT).
[11] John also heard Jesus say, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11, NAS).
[12] See James 2:15-17.
[13] This worship service closed with singing "This Is How We Know What Love Is," by Anchor Hymns and Jasmine Mullen.

Chorus
This is how we know what love is … Jesus Christ laid down His life for us
This is how we know what love is … Jesus Christ laid down His life for us … Father help us love like Jesus

Verse
So if we see (so if we see) … Someone in need (someone in need)
Let our hearts have mercy … We have so much (we have so much)
More than enough (more than enough) … Let us share it freely

Outro
Father help us love each other … (Father help us love each other)
Every sister every brother … (Every sister every brother) … In the way we treat each other … Love like Jesus