

That You May Know – 1 John 3:11-18

*“We pursue being a disciple making family: surrendered to Jesus, transformed by the gospel, and **saturated in His word.**”*

In this text John unpacks what he meant in v.10 when he wrote that 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. These two criteria are based on the habitual nature. True Christ followers should be characterized by righteousness and love. In v. 11-18 we see what is meant by “loving his brother.” It is truly a way to examine our lives and find confidence and assurance in our salvation.

Discussion Questions* – *do not feel the pressure to cover them all

1. John points out that this message of love is from the beginning. There is a mandate that we should love one another. It is an unchanging message, but this message can change us. How have you experienced this message of love before you became a Christ follower and also after coming to Christ? We often link spiritual maturity with knowledge or experience, but it appears in this text that John links it with growing in love towards others. How would you characterize your spiritual growth over the last year in light of this reality? What would help you become more spiritually mature? How does a correct response to God’s love determine our love for others?
2. Clearly this message was from the beginning of the gospel message, but it can also be found in the beginning in the garden of Eden. John uses the example of Cain killing his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-16). We don’t completely know what God required of the brothers for worship and sacrifice, however, we do know that Abel’s offering was acceptable, and Cain’s was not. The writer of Hebrews tells us Abel’s offering was offered in faith. John points out that Cain’s own deeds were evil and Abel’s were righteous. John warns the believers not to be surprised when the world hates them because of their righteousness. Describe a time that you have been upset or angry at someone who was more “righteous” than you. Either before becoming a Christian or after. Why did it bother you so badly? How did you respond to them? (i.e. wished the worst, jealousy, anger, lied to them, pointed out faults, etc.)
3. Cain was clearly a murderer but, in this passage, we are reminded of the sentiment of Jesus that everyone who is able to have habitual malice or anger or hate in his heart towards his brother is a murderer as well. This person still

abides in death. As believers, we all mess up here from time to time and God can forgive us our sin but for this to be the habitual pattern of our heart may show that we still abide in death. How do we take the example of Jesus and not allow anger and hatred to grow in our hearts? Why is it so hard to love certain individuals? How might we grow in this area? What does this look like in the church? What would it take for a church to reflect the example of Jesus and His love to a dying world?

4. We see the example of sacrificial love in Jesus where He laid down His life for us. This is an extreme case that we may be called to do one day but the other example is probably a more common call. We are called not to close our heart towards those in need if we have the world's goods. We are to love not only in word and talk but in deed and action. It's important to remember that we should love people which will lead us to showing that love. So often we tend to "show love" to people without actually loving them. Those people can become projects. (i.e. soup kitchens, Christmas gifts, etc.) How might we protect ourselves from closing our heart toward those in need? Can you describe a time that you made someone a project versus truly loving them as one created in the image of God?
5. Jesus said there would always be "need and poverty" among us until He returns. How can we lose sight of the spiritual need and focus solely on the material need? How can we lose sight of the material need and focus solely on the spiritual need? Which one do you tend to find yourself gravitating towards? Why?