

I John: Lesson #88 – Love Your Brother

Notes for Parents to Study With Their Children

For Wednesday, April 8th

Read I John: 2:7-11; 3:10-21; 4:7-13,16-21 (a simplified explanation of the text will be supplied at the end of these notes).

Memory Verse: I John 3:11 “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

Love One Another

- The night before Jesus died on the cross, 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." (Jn. 13:34)
- As John writes years later in I John, he commands that we all “love one another” (I Jn. 3:11). That, he says, was not really a new commandment because Jesus had taught them that almost 50 years earlier. But John also says that the command was new to those who had never known to live that way before in Jesus.
- God had always wanted His people to love each other. Loving your neighbor as yourself was one of the greatest of the Old Testament commands. But Jesus added something new to loving others: “love one another; **as I have loved you**”. Jesus loved us enough to leave His home in heaven and come to our world. He spent all of His time helping others. Then He was willing to die to save us. That is a love that gives up things, that makes sacrifices. That is the kind of love we should have for one another.
- John says, “By this we know love, because He (Jesus) laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (I Jn. 3:16). Jesus showed us the kind of love we should have for Christians. We should “lay down our lives” for them. For Jesus that meant dying on the cross. We don’t have to die to “lay down our lives”. It just means that we aren’t selfish, but try to help each other, be kind to each other, and do good for each other.
- We shouldn’t just claim to love others, but should do things that show our love. If I saw that you were very hungry and your family didn’t have any food, then if I really loved you I would try to help. I would give you money or go buy some food for you. If I didn’t try to help you, it would mean I didn’t really love you like I should.
- God showed that He loved us, even when we didn’t love Him. He sent Jesus to die for our sins so that we could be saved and go to heaven. To love God we must love other Christians.

Loving is Walking in the Light

- We talked in our last lesson about walking in the light. When Jesus came it was like light came to the world. He is called “the light of the world.” In John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Now in John’s letter, he says, “the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.” Because Jesus has come and given us His Word, we have the opportunity to walk in His light.

- But what if a person claimed to walk in the light of what Jesus taught us, and yet they hated their brother. They wouldn't really be walking in the light at all. That wasn't the way Jesus lived. That wasn't what He taught us to do. So a person who hates their brother is really walking in the darkness.
- How could anyone be ready to face God in the Judgment Day when they haven't truly loved their brothers and sisters in Christ?

Walking in the Devil's Darkness

- If walking in the light means that we are walking in Jesus' light and living the way He wants us to, then what does it mean if we are walking in the darkness? It means we are walking the way the Devil wants us to.
- Those who choose to live their lives walking in sinful ways or walking in hateful attitudes toward others are acting like the Devil. John says that they are "children of the devil" because they look like him in their ways instead of looking like God.
- When people walk in darkness, they may claim to be God's children, but they are really the Devil's children.

Some in the World Will Hate Us for Being Righteous

- John says we should not be surprised if some in the world hate us just because we want to live right. Jesus always lived right and did good, but some people still hated Him.
- John reminds us of the story of Cain and Abel. Because of His faith Abel offered God an acceptable sacrifice. Cain made an offering to God, but not as God wanted. When Cain became upset, God encouraged him to do right and not let his anger get out of control, but Cain only got more angry. One day he got so mad that he killed his brother. Cain was acting like the Devil. He was letting sinful hatred overcome him.
- Just as Cain killed Abel, the world may dislike us because we try to do what is right. But even if the world dislikes us, we have to keep serving God.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

Walking in the Light Means Loving Your Brother

2:7 Brethren, what I am writing to you is not a new commandment to you. It's an old commandment you have heard from the beginning – the same teaching you have heard from the beginning when Jesus first taught us.

8 But if I can say it again, in another sense, it is a new commandment because it was new when Jesus began to teach it, and it is also new in your life because the darkness has gone away and the true light is now shining.

9 Anyone who claims to be in the light, and yet hates their brother, that person is still in the darkness.

10 The person who loves their brother is someone who remains in the light, and there is no reason they should stumble.

11 But anyone who hates their brother is walking in the darkness, and has no idea where they are headed because the darkness has blinded their eyes.

Are You a Child of God or a Child of the Devil?

3:10 Its this very thing that clearly shows who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Everyone who acts unrighteously is not of God. All those who don't love their brother cannot be of God.

11 We know that is true because that is the message we heard from the very beginning, that we should love one another.

12 We should not be like Cain who obviously was of the evil one and ended up killing his brother. And why did Cain kill Abel? Because his own works were evil and his brother's were righteous.

13 So don't be surprised, my brethren, if the world hates you.

True Love is About Deeds, Not Just Words

14 Because we love the brethren, we know that we have passed from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive.

15 Not loving your brethren means that you remain in spiritual death.

16 Because Jesus laid down His life for us, this is how we came to understand love, and that teaches us that we should be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 Here is someone who has the necessities that keep us alive in the world (like food and clothing) and they can see that their brethren really need help, but they shut their mercy and compassion off from them. How could the love of God be dwelling in that person?

18 My little children, don't love just in your words and speech, but in the deeds you do and in a way that's really true.

19 And in this way we will really know that we are of the truth and our hearts can be confident before God.

20 Because if your own heart condemns you, then you know that God is greater than our hearts and He certainly knows everything and would know that you are wrong.

21 When your heart doesn't condemn you, you have the freedom to speak to God.

Love Shows You Are of God

4:7 Beloved, love one another because love is of God and everyone who demonstrates love is born of God and knows God.

8 The person who does not love is not of God because God is love.

9 In this way the love of God was shown towards us because God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we could live through Him.

10 In this we see true love: He sent His Son as a sacrifice to satisfy the punishment for our sins. But God didn't do this because we loved Him, but because He loved us.

11 Beloved, if God could love us in this way, then we too have an obligation to love one another.

12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love has accomplished His goal in us.

13 In this way we know that we dwell in God and He dwells in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

16 And we have known and believed the love God has in us. God is love and those who continue to dwell in love will continue to dwell in God, and God will continue to dwell in them.

17 In this love has accomplished its goal, so that we can be confident about what we will say in the Day of Judgment. Because just as the Lord was, so are we in this world.

18 In love we have no reason to fear. When love has accomplished its goal, fear can be cast out. Because fear has torment, it indicates that God's love has not yet become complete in you.

19 We love Him because He loved us first.

20 If someone says, "I love God" and yet they hate their brethren, that person is a liar. If you don't love your brethren who you can see, how can you love God who you cannot see?

21 And this is the command that we have from Him, that loving God means loving your brethren, too.