

Do You Love Like Jesus?

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[0 : 00] Turn your Bible to 1 John chapter 3 verses 11 through 18.

! And if you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles in the pews that you can use. If you don't own a Bible, please take that Bible home with you as a gift from our church to you in our hopes that you'll continue to be reading God's Word. If you're there in 1 John chapter 3, would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together?

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? Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know, love, that he 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. May God add a blessing to a reading of his word. Would you please be seated? So John is the human author of this letter, and John was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. As such, John's name appears pretty frequently in all four Gospels, but Mark's Gospel records a nickname that Jesus gave to both John and his brother James.

That nickname is Bonerges, an Aramaic term that means sons of thunder. You know, what a cool nickname.

Sons of thunder. You think of like brothers who are outside linebackers who are playing on the same football team, converging on the quarterback. Here come the sons of thunder. Or like a tag team in professional wrestling coming down the aisle, the sons of thunder. Or even like a heavy metal band, the sons of thunder. What a great and cool nickname. This is the only place in Scripture that mentions John and his brother James as the sons of thunder. And Mark doesn't give any explanation as to why Jesus gave them that nickname. Perhaps some have speculated their father, whose name was Zebedee, now that doesn't mean thunder. It means gift of God. But perhaps his nickname was thunder, and so his sons were the sons of thunder. One of my great-grandfathers was nicknamed rabbit. And when they had my grandfather, they nicknamed him bunny. So it's plausible that that was how these brothers got their nickname.

[3 : 54] But I don't think that's why John and James received this nickname, the sons of thunder, from Jesus. We know that Jesus was purposeful in everything that he did. And we know that Jesus knew all people. He knew their thoughts, their motives, their intentions, their true personalities.

And I think he had his own reason for dubbing these brothers with the nickname, the sons of thunder. He knew that John and James possessed a thunder-like or thunder-like qualities. And we see those qualities on display in the gospel of Luke in a couple of places. First, in Luke chapter 9, verse 49, through 50. John answered, Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop them because he does not follow with us. It's as if John is saying, I don't think we can trust this guy. He's not a part of our denomination. He's a little too charismatic for us, or maybe a little too hellfire and brimstone for our taste. I don't know that he graduated from one of our approved seminaries. But Jesus said to him, do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you. So we see a little thunder, a little rumbling in John's heart, and Jesus rebukes that. But it wasn't long afterward that the muffled sound of thunder in John's heart began to boom loudly in Luke chapter 9, verse 54 through 56. There, Jesus is traveling with his disciples, and he wants to go through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem. So he sends some of the disciples ahead of him into Samaria to find a place for them to stay. But when the Samaritans learned that Jesus was coming

and his destination was Jerusalem, they refused to make any kind of accommodations for him and his disciples.

And now in verse 54, we see the response of the sons of thunder to this news. And when his disciples, James and John saw it, when they heard this, they said, Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them? Imagine how indignant, how hot-tempered these brothers were. But Jesus turned and he rebuked them and they went on to another village. It's as if the brothers are saying, so they think they can snub you, Jesus? Look, we've got our finger hovering over the heavenly nuke button. You give us the word and we'll go Old Testament on these people. We will take them out.

We'll wipe them off the face of the earth. We'll reduce them to dust and ashes. You just tell us when to do it. So sons of thunder sounds like a fitting name for these two brothers, don't you think?

Just a little bit. But as these men followed Jesus, they changed. After Jesus' resurrection and his ascension, the church age began. And James was the first apostle killed for his faith in Jesus.

[7 : 59] And by the time John wrote this letter, he is the last of the apostles who remain on the earth. And this letter, like his other writings, demonstrate that even at his old age, John still thundered.

But it was a thundering of a different kind. His thundering, his fervency was tempered by his love for his Lord and for his church. The word love appears over 40 times in 1 John.

And it appears over 50 times in his gospel, which is more than all the other three gospels combined. John had seen the love of Jesus demonstrated many times, and he experienced the love of Jesus personally.

He saw and experienced Jesus' love the night before his crucifixion, as he met with his disciples in the upper room, when Jesus took a basin of water and he got down on his knees and he washed his disciples' feet.

And later that same night, he heard Jesus say in John 13, 34 through 35, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.

[9 : 28] Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Obviously, the next day, John saw the supreme demonstration of Jesus' love when he willingly went to the cross to die for sinners.

John knew, and John had personally experienced the love of Jesus, and it changed his life. It changed his temperament.

And so today, John is better known by another nickname, which is the apostle of love, due to the frequency with which that theme appears in all of his writings.

In this letter, John has already reminded Christians of Jesus' command to love one another.

Remember when we were in chapter 2, verses 9 through 11. Let's look at it again.

[10 : 34] There he says, In our text today, John is calling Christians to examine, once again, the genuineness of their faith and their claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, based upon whether or not they obey his command to love their brothers.

And he knows how prone, even true disciples of Jesus are to slip back into a selfish, self-centered disposition, causing them to thunder against their brothers and sisters in Christ, instead of loving them as our Heavenly Father has commanded us to.

And so here he reminds us once more to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. The main idea of this passage, John's main idea in this portion of his letter is this.

True children of God love the family of God like Jesus. True children of God love the family of God like Jesus.

Now, I'm sure you've spent some time in the church and you've heard the statement, the church would be perfect if it weren't for the people.

[12 : 25] Or maybe you've heard an unbeliever say, I would be a Christian if it weren't for Christians. Both comments allude to the fact that Christians and churches are sometimes dysfunctional.

The reality is that this side of heaven, no church is perfect. And neither is any follower, disciple of Jesus.

The church is made up of sinners. The church is for sinners. You can't be saved.

You can't be a member of the church unless you admit first that you are a sinner. At its best, the church in this age consists of sinners who are sincerely but imperfectly following Jesus. And I know how messy and how hurtful siblings in God's family can be towards each other. But that doesn't change and that doesn't nullify our Lord's command that we love one another.

[13 : 51] However mistreated, however unloved you've felt, Jesus has felt that and experienced it much worse.

Jesus was abandoned by his disciples in his hour of distress.

They slept peacefully while he prayed in anguish, shedding drops of blood from his forehead. They fled. They fled from him when they came to arrest him and then try him and then when he was executed.

But Jesus still loved and he still forgave his disciples. And John says that that same kind of love and forgiveness that characterized Jesus should characterize us too.

The church is composed of people that Jesus loves. They are people Jesus commands you to love.

[15 : 09] And true children of God love the family of God like Jesus. Now there are three components that formulate John's main idea for us in this text about loving the family of God like Jesus.

And the first component is just the principle. The principle which he lays out for us in verse 11 that we should love one another. Look at verse 11 again with me.

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning that we should love one another.

Love is an essential characteristic of what it means to be a Christian.

If it weren't for God's love there wouldn't be a church for any of us to go to belong to or complain about.

John 3 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. The apostle Paul opens his letter to the church in Ephesus by saying in love.

[16 : 22] He, God, predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace which he has blessed us in the beloved Jesus Christ.

Later on in this letter verse John John will say in chapter 4 verse 10 in this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

So understand the only reason you or I get to be a part of God's family is because he chose to love us. Otherwise we would continue to be spiritual orphans.

We'd be like little orphan Annie's living in the slums of sin and enslaved to a worse taskmaster than Mrs. Hannigan ever was.

In the movie Daddy Warbucks adopts Annie to improve his image. Remember that? But our heavenly father sent his only son Jesus to atone for our sins that we will bear his image as his adopted children.

[17 : 43] So brother sister never forget how great of a recipient of love that you are in Christ.

Not only has he made you the recipient of his love he's enabled you to be a dispenser of his love.

We read in Romans 5 5 and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

One thing that drives me crazy is opening a new bag of potato chips. You know what I'm talking about?

half the bag is empty. It's sealed and they seal it with air to make it look like it's full when you buy it. But it's not full. It's half empty. But thankfully God's love isn't like a bag of potato chips. It's full.

[18 : 55] In fact it's more than full. It overflows. it overflows within our hearts. Like a well watered crop that lives in the light of Christ the Holy Spirit continually nourishes us with what we need to overflow to bear fruit.

The Apostle Paul lists the fruits of the Spirit in Ephesians chapter 5 verses 22 through 23 and the first fruit he mentions is what? Love.

A true disciple of Jesus Christ has received God's love to the point of overflowing. They love God and they love what God loves.

And one of the ways they most clearly demonstrate that is by how they love the church their family in Christ.

John will say later on chapter 5 verses 2 through 3 by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commands of which one of those is love your brothers love your sisters for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commands are not burdensome.

[20 : 14] So this is the principle we should love one another and God has given us what we need to obey that command to love one another.

You know if you grew up with siblings I'm sure you probably found it hard to live with them at times especially when you were younger and you would get in fights and you would get in disputes and arguments might even throw a punch or two.

and it grieved your parents whenever they saw you being nasty to your brothers or to your sisters. In fact it may have been the case for you and maybe it's the case for some of you younger ones that you believe your sibling or you thought of your sibling as the worst person in the world and that life your life would be so much better without them but mom and dad would remind you to love them and what was their reason because we are a family that was all the reason you needed the church is not a collection of acquaintances or colleagues or even best friends you can choose your best friend but you can't choose your family the church is a family and like a family we'll have disagreements but as we mature as we forgive as we choose to love our siblings they do become our friends people we should and by

God's doing can love and we can love them like Jesus that's the principle and John continues to make this point by using a negative and then a positive illustration so he's given us the principle now he gives us a picture and the picture is of Cain's hatred and Christ's love so John said in verse 11 we should love one another and then he says in the beginning of verse 12 we should not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother Genesis 4 records the first act of worship and the first act of murder in human history soon after Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden of Eden because of their sin they started a family they had two sons Cain and his younger brother [23 : 00] Abel now some scholars think that these brothers may have been twins since there's no element of time expressed between their two births but that's not important for us to think about this morning what we need to know is that these two were brothers and Cain was the oldest verse 2 of chapter 4 tells us that Cain was a worker of the ground so Cain's job was he was a farmer while Abel was a keeper of the sheep his job was as a shepherd so now we read in verse 3 through 7 of Genesis chapter 4 in the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground and Abel also brought of the first born of his flock and of their fat portions and the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering but for Cain and his offering he had no regard so Cain was very angry and his face fell the Lord said to

Cain why are you angry and why has your face fallen if you do well will you not be accepted and if you do not do well sin is crouching at the door its desire is contrary to you but you must rule over it so what we see happening here is Abel offering the best of his flock his very best while Cain merely offered something from his crop Abel's offering was an animal it was a blood sacrifice while Cain's offering was a vegetable a bloodless sacrifice and I think God favored Abel's offering because Abel not only offered his best but Abel paid attention the first sacrifice recorded in scripture was a sacrifice that God made to clothe

Adam and Eve's nakedness the skins he clothed them with came from some animal so Abel understood that a life must be sacrificed to cover and to atone for sin and all of this foreshadowed Jesus' coming and sacrificing himself by shedding his blood to atone for our sins we also know from scripture that God sees in our hearts he knows our motivations and so there was something about what these brothers offered to God and God knew the motivation behind what it was that they gave we read Hebrews 11 chapter 4 it says by faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain through which he was commended as righteous God commending him by accepting his gifts and through his faith though he died he still speaks the author of Hebrews mentions

Abel again in chapter 12 verse 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel so taking all of this together what we see what we understand is that Abel's sacrifice was favored by God because it was offered in faith it was offered in obedience to what God had prescribed and it also foreshadowed the coming of the one who would crush the head of the serpent whose sacrifice unlike the sacrifice of animals would fully satisfy God's wrath and completely atone and wash away our sins now Abel I don't think fully understood that at the moment but he trusted God he had faith and he was obedient when God

speaks to Cain he reminds him that his situation is a result of his lack of faith and lack of obedience when God says if you do well meaning if you obey me and have faith in me will you not be accepted by me then God issues

Cain a warning and if you do not do well sin is crouching at the door its desire is contrary to you but you must rule over it so Cain had a choice to make he could repent in response to God's rebuke and receive forgiveness and be in right relationship with both God and his brother Abel or he could ignore God's rebuke and be consumed by his hatred and in verse 8 we find out that's exactly what happened Cain spoke to Abel his brother and when they were in the field Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him the Greek verb John uses in 3:12 translated in the ESV as murder describes butchering and slaughtering it's

[28:37] Hebrew equivalent was used to describe how animals were killed in sacrifice which was by slitting their throat it's as if Cain was saying okay God you want a sacrifice I'll give you one it's as if Cain was thinking God I can't kill you but I can kill my brother continuing in verse 12 in 1st John 3 John asks a rhetorical question to anyone who knows this story who could easily answer and why did he Cain murder him because his own deeds were evil and his brothers were righteous Cain's actions identified him as being of the evil one the evil one Satan only loves himself but God includes others in his love and your actions reveal who you truly are more than that they reveal who you truly belong to as John continues in verse 13 do not be surprised brothers that the world hates you well why shouldn't we be surprised like Abel our righteous actions which we do not to be saved but because we are saved having received

God's love which pours out of us in invisible and demonstrable ways that display God's love all of that makes the unrighteous the ungodly the unsaved feel uncomfortable with themselves and their sin which they love more than God a true born again believer who is living a life for God's glory will be hated by the world for that Jesus said in John 15 if the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hated you if you are of the world the world would love you as its own but because you are not of the world but I chose you out of the world therefore the world hates you the Bible says that Satan is the one who rules over the world in rebellion the system of the world what it values what it promotes he rules over it in rebellion against God and the result is that the world not only hates Jesus but hates those who follow him in 2nd

Timothy 3:12-13 Paul tells Timothy a young pastor indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Jesus Christ will be persecuted while evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse deceiving and being deceived unbelievers people of this world do not love God's family church doesn't make sense to them they view the Bible as an outdated outmoded books rules that rob people of joy and anyone who believes that it's God's word and who obeys it threatens their worldview and I believe that deep down inside they know they're wrong why else would they hate God and his people so much whatever reason could explain why

Christianity more than any other religion in this world finds itself in the crosshairs of this world because Christians love what they hate and hate what they love but as Christians we should never forget that all of us before salvation were right there with them we were right there with them all of us were born with a sin nature all of us were born with a desire to be our own God and acted with hostility towards anyone or anything that threatened that but by God's mercy and through his love we didn't remain in that state as John continues in verse 14 we know that we have passed out of death to life because we love the brothers when God saves you he transforms you he turns you from a hater to a lover someone who not only loves other

Christians but loves those who hate them as Jesus did think of all of those who have made themselves enemies of the church today all the people and all of the ideas they espouse that oppose the truth that you know to be true in Jesus think of them let me ask you would you rather God be gracious to save them and put them in the pew next to you or would you rather that they only experience God's wrath and they stay outside of this building and remain outside of the kingdom of God forever which would you rather have John finishes painting the picture this part of the picture of what it looks like not to love with a warning and the rest of verse 14 and 15 whoever does not love abides in death everyone who hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him now you might hear that and you might think that sounds extreme there might be some people I hate but I wouldn't murder them well consider with me what Jesus said about hatred during his sermon on the mount

[35 : 01] Matthew 5 21 through 22 there he said you have heard that it was said to those of old you shall not murder and whoever murders will be liable to judgment but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council and whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire Jesus' point is that murderous actions are rooted in hateful attitudes and when you hate someone it's as if you're saying to yourself you know what it would be better if that person didn't exist that's often what you do when you hate someone isn't it you treat them as if they don't exist or you work against them to ruin their existence so they feel like they don't want to exist anymore if there are people in this church who you hate and I don't mean people who annoy you or who you maybe dislike

I'm talking about people you can't stand the sight of what does such a heart condition reveal about you if there are people in the church who you hate like that doesn't it say God I'm thankful that you saved me but I wish you hadn't have saved them if that is the truth for you then you have something major to repent of today or maybe it could be the case that you never truly known the love of God savingly John completes the picture of what true love looks like in verse 16 when he says by this we know love that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers brother sister when you were dead in sin hating

God and hating others God in his love laid down his life to save your life all your sins are committed against him you've rejected him you've cheated on him with other loves and yet in love he made the ultimate sacrifice for you you know the world wants to define love for you but don't buy into their cheap alternatives the world loves a kind of love that doesn't have any kind of commitment involved with it but true love the kind of love that we vow to have for our spouse when we get married is unto death there is no better picture of that than when

God sent Jesus his only son to die on the cross for our sins and in Jesus we see what true love looks like don't we true love looks out for the interest of others true love submits it gives more than it takes true love sacrifices for the benefit of others not for self expecting nothing in return true love like Christ love enables a person to love what otherwise would be unlovable true love's most vivid picture love's true love true love is the sinless son of God dying on the cross who didn't ask to be saved and giving them a share of his father's eternal inheritance making them his brothers and his sisters true love is so much more than words true love does stuff true love is something Christians who have received God's love in such lavish proportions can't help but practice so now the third component we know the principle we know the picture now the practice we are to love in deed and in truth in verses 17 through 18 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 truth true love is something God's children practice their love works it does things like Jesus' love did something amazing for us dying in our place that we could be forgiven and receive his love do you love like

[41 : 23] Jesus do we as a church do we love like Jesus does sacrificial working love define the culture of this church now as I was thinking of this passage there was many people that just the Holy Spirit brought to my mind people who I've known in the church who have shown me the love of Christ in amazing ways and one of those people I want to share with you about is my preaching professor at Midwestern Dr.

Aubrey and you've heard me talk about this man before I love this guy because of how much love he showed to me in his in his classroom while he was I want to say criticizing but critiquing our sermons it was like he was the blacksmith and we were pieces of metal and he would just beat and beat and and light on fire and beat some more and beat some more and it was brutal but he did it for our good and each one of us emerged from his class better at handling the word of God years later after I had graduated from seminary and was in my first church as a pastor in Leavenworth Dr. Aubrey and his wife visited our church one Sunday and it just so happened to be a Sunday where Danny was still in the hospital with Hazel who had been born early and was in the NICU for a month and so I got up in the morning and I just shared with the church about what was going on and asked for them to pray and I was really nervous to preach because Dr.

Aubrey was there and I was trying to make I hope I'm still preaching like he taught me to and on his way out he handed me a check folded up just as he shook my hand he said here good to see you a check for \$300 I saw him again last year up at Midwestern as I've gone back for my doctorate he was one of my teachers and he went out to lunch with us he paid for my lunch there was a police officer in front of us he paid for his lunch I asked him for any ideas for a dissertation topic and he

said I have one for you and he told me what it was and then he gave me 75 pages of notes his own notes on the topic and he said here take these use them don't give me any credit for it I hope that this helps and if it doesn't or if you have questions call me

God has used that man to bless my life I praise God for him you can do the same you can be that same kind of blessing for someone else and I've seen it here I've experienced it personally I've seen how you've loved other people and my encouragement for you God's word encouraged for us through his word is to be the kinds of people whose love does stuff and if we do Jesus told us that by this love that we have for one another people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another so we're going to get real practical this morning here's how we should adjust to what we've heard in God's word make a plan to demonstrate

[45 : 23] Jesus' love through your words and actions make a plan today be in prayer God who is someone this week that I can demonstrate Jesus' love through my words and through my actions and it doesn't have to be just one it could be more than one in fact it would be great if it was more than one but make a plan look around don't think so much about you and yourself and your comfortableness and what you need pay attention to what's going on in lives of those who are around you and say something do something to show them the love of the Lord now some application questions and again we're getting real practical here question number one goes along with what I just said who in our church needs something you can supply who in our church needs something that you can supply and how will you demonstrate

Christ like love to them there's a lot of things might not be financially it could be many different things and I know I'm going a little bit longer but Charlie comes and has fixed my washer and my dryer so many times I can't even count now man what a blessing to have somebody in the church who knows how things work I have no idea but maybe you have a skill like that you say hey I can supply it who's got broken stuff or something else question number two who in our church do you need to forgive and show love to your hateful attitude towards that person that's not from God that is from the evil one and so who is it that you are harboring such feelings towards you need to forgive them who is that person and not only should you forgive them in your heart like Jesus you should go the extra mile and do something to show that you love them now if somebody does something loving to you this week hopefully you don't think well you must have hated me or something like that but anyway I think they will be grateful for whatever way you show love to them and then the third question digging even deeper here how far are you willing to go and how much are you willing to give to display to others the love that you have received from Jesus how far are you willing to go how much are you willing!

to sacrifice young person it may be that God is calling you to ministry he may be calling you to the mission field he may be calling you to leave everything that is comfortable and to go halfway across the world leaving everything you know behind to share the love of Jesus Christ how far are you willing to go how much are you willing to give to display to others the love that you've received! from Jesus think about how far Jesus was willing to go descending from heaven coming to earth adding a human nature to his divine nature being obedient to God the Father and everything which led him to the cross where there he died for sinners for his enemies and there from the cross he pleaded out for God the Father to forgive them and then he rose on the third day as proof that those who have faith in Christ have truly been forgiven and we truly are able to love in the way that he loved we're about to sing a song and this song was in my head all week long as I prepared this sermon now for some of you this might be a hokey song and that's okay I don't care we're going to sing it anyways

[50 : 04] I love you but I don't care some of you some of you are going to think yes I'm so glad we're singing this song maybe it's been in your head already it's called the family of God Heather told me that her church growing up that before their meals down in their fellowship hall they would all gather around and hold hands and they would but I do hope that you pay attention to the words and I do pray that the Holy Spirit just it gets stuck in your brain your mind your heart all week long until you follow through with obedience to love others like Jesus let's pray Lord God we are so thankful for you so thankful to be a part of your family Lord it wasn't because we were better than anyone else it was because you and your choice to show love to us God not only have we received your love through

Jesus Christ you have also through the indwelling of your Holy Spirit made it possible for us to love like you and so God I pray for me I pray for everyone listening to this sermon and to this prayer that

you would open our eyes and our hearts to those who are around us and that Holy Spirit you would prompt us to say and to do something to show love to them and that the result of all of this Lord would not only please you but it would testify to who you are to this world that more and more people would know the love of God through Jesus Christ in whose name we pray Thank you.