

1 John 3:10-18

Title: Love, the New Birth Mark

Proposition: If we belong to Jesus' family, we will love one another in action and truth.

Lead in: Our love for God's people is evidence of whose family we belong to.

I. CAIN'S FAMILY is defined by enmity with God's children (10-15)**A. Tracing the Family Roots (10-12)**

1. There are only two families (10)
2. Love integral to the Gospel (11)
3. Unlike Cain (12) [Set the scene/background]
 - a) The Offspring (Genesis 3:15)
 - b) The Murder (Genesis 4) (12b)

B. Family Traits: Evidences of Life and Death (13-15)

1. Do Not Be Surprised (13)
 - a) Cain is a prototype of the world
 - b) Enmity between offspring (Jn 15:18-19)
2. From Death to Life, evidenced by Love (14)
 - a) Brotherly love gives us assurance of salvation (14a)
 - b) A lack of love evidences spiritual death (14b)
3. Hatred, Murder and the Lack of Spiritual Life (15)
 - a) Jesus equated hate with murder (Mt. 5:21)
 - b) Present tense indicates ongoing and current condition
 - (1) Hatred and murder can be washed by His blood
 - c) Murder in the heart and eternal life are mutually exclusive

II. CHRIST'S FAMILY is formed and defined by love in action (16-18)**A. Joining the Family: The Love We Have Known (16a)**

1. We know love because God has loved us in Jesus
 - a) This is how we are to define love, our standard
 - b) Love is self-sacrifice for the good of another

B. Following the Family Footsteps: The Example to Live Out (16b-18)

1. We *ought* to lay our lives down (16b)
 - a) What does it mean to lay our lives down?
 - b) An analogy from marriage
2. Seeing and meeting the need (17)
 - a) What are the world's goods?
 - b) Seeing is knowing
 - c) Withholding compassion incompatible with God's love
 - (1) God's love options
3. Love necessitates action
 - a) Loving "in truth" means loving in action
 - b) It is not enough to say the words of love
 - (1) James 2:15-16

PROPOSITION: If we belong to Jesus' family, we will love one another in action and truth.

LEAD IN: Our love for God's people is evidence of whose family we belong to.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Good morning IDC. I'm Manny Prieto, one of the pastors. If we haven't met, it's possible you have at the very least heard my children or perhaps even been interrogated by them at some point.
- B. My wife Jillian and I have **four beautiful girls**, *two by way of adoption and two biologically*.
- C. There's a joke on her side of the family, that no matter who you mix an Abraham with (*Abraham is her maiden name*), the kids all look the same. Catching a glimpse of my wife with our nieces is a pretty surreal experience. It's like, "*Does my wife have clones?*"
- D. When our first biological daughter was born, I was prepared for this inevitable reality, that this kid wasn't going to look anything like me. I was pretty excited when I noticed a birthmark on the back of her neck. "*I have one of those too!*" Here was my genetic contribution to my daughter. It wasn't much, but I'll take it.
- E. Well, come to find out, it's called a **stork bite** and it's pretty common and hers went away after a while. *So much for that.*
- F. **We're all pretty quick to look for unifying characteristics in a family.** "*He's got his daddy's eyes.*" "*That's grandma's smile.*" Or if you ask Pastor Shane, all babies just look like aliens for a while.
- G. With a family as diverse as ours—we've got **White, Black, Cuban, Nicaraguan, Indonesia, Kenyan and Indian** all represented. It's not so easy to find a **physical** trait that **UNIFIES** us.

- H. In fact, at this stage in our family, if I had to pick **just one trait that makes a Prieto a Prieto**, it would probably be **the capacity to make noise on a superhuman level**. If you've ever met my girls, you know it's true.
- I. When we consider what God's family looks like, we similarly come up short if we're expecting to find a unifying **PHYSICAL** trait.
- J. NO CHRISTIAN COMES UPON RIGHT STANDING BEFORE GOD BY BEING BORN TO THE RIGHT FAMILY.
- K. SALVATION IS NOT DISPENSED ALONG ETHNIC LINES OR NATIONAL BOUNDARIES.
- L. GOD'S FAMILY IS KNIT TOGETHER IN A SUPERNATURAL WAY.
- M. But just because it's a family that **transcends physical traits**, doesn't mean there aren't any marks. In fact, 1 John highlights **4 tests, or marks**, of those with genuine saving faith.
- N. In Chapter 3, starting in verse 10, we're going to focus on John's emphasis on **LOVE for God's children** as a **birth mark of new life**.
- O. We'll organize our exploration by looking at two families. **CAIN'S FAMILY** and **CHRIST'S FAMILY**.
- P. These families go all the way **back to Genesis**. Each of these families is **recognizable** by certain traits and today we'll zoom in on **LOVE**, or the lack thereof, as a **KEY** family trait from this text.
- Q. *Just imagine we're going to do a little **Spiritual Ancestry DNA**.*
- R. There are only **two options**. There are only **two families**. There are (1) **God's children** and there are the (2) **devil's children**.
- S. This text is unambiguous. **[PROPOSITION]: IF WE BELONG TO JESUS' FAMILY, WE WILL LOVE ONE ANOTHER IN ACTION AND TRUTH.**
- T. PUT ANOTHER WAY: **[LEAD IN]: OUR LOVE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE IS EVIDENCE OF WHOSE FAMILY WE BELONG TO.**

TRANSITION: So let's explore the family tree. We'll look at CAIN'S FAMILY first. What marks CAIN'S FAMILY?

II. CAIN'S FAMILY is defined by enmity with God's children (10-15)

A. Tracing the Family Roots (10-12)

1. There are only two families (10)

- a) How many families are we dealing with here? How many options are there?
- b) Remember, there's **just 2**. We have **God's children** on one side and the **devil's children** on the other.
- c) This feels intense, right? *It is!*
- d) These two families are **rooted** in the first few chapters of Genesis and you can *trace them* **throughout** the **entirety** of the biblical narrative.
- e) What forms the families and what evidences do they produce?

2. Love integral to the Gospel (11)

- a) The families have their roots in Genesis but they are **DEFINED** in terms of their **response** to the gospel message.
- b) Verse 11 references the **message heard from the beginning**.
- c) What is that? Well, it's the *apostolic gospel*.
- d) It's the proclamation of the **good news** that **sin can be forgiven** and **we can be right with God by faith in Jesus Christ alone**.
- e) We can receive that message with **open arms** as the **desperate sinners we are** or we can **reject it**, relying on **OUR** efforts.
- f) This message from the beginning is the **good news of Jesus for sinners**. And that's not all.

- g) Receiving this message in **faith produces fruit**. *What specific fruit is John referring to here?*
- h) **Loving one another**. The command to love one another goes hand in hand with the gospel.
- i) It's a natural product of **believing** the good news and **belonging** to God's family.
- j) *We should take note here that love for one another is **NOT** what **CAUSES** someone to be in God's family. Rather it is the **RESULT of** being in God's family.*
- k) Naturally, a **rejection of the Gospel** would also mean a **rejection of God's family**, and of the **family trait of love**.
- l) The gospel message heard from the beginning, which includes in it the *command to love one another* **in its very essence**, is **contrasted** with one of the devil's children: **CAIN**.

3. Unlike Cain (12) [Set the scene/background]

- a) We should love one another **UNLIKE CAIN**, who was of the evil one.
- b) The text is drawing out for us the limbs of this particular family tree. He was **of** the evil one *and murdered his brother*.
- c) This language brings to mind **John 8**, where some Jews are fundamentally **misunderstanding** how **God's family traces its lineage**.
- d) "We are descendants of Abraham," and "Abraham is our father," they tell Jesus and finally they arrive at the statement, "we have one Father — God."
- e) *And how does Jesus respond to them?* Verse 42 and on tells us, (1) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, **you would love me**, because I came from God and I am here."

(2) And then in verse 44, "You are of **your father the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer **from the beginning...**"

- f) Their **rejection** of Jesus as the Messiah, their **lack of love** for the Son of God, **evidences** their actual family ties.
- g) It doesn't matter whose bloodline they come from, **their father is the devil**. These are weighty words. "He was a murderer **from the beginning...**"
- h) So, let's trace this family tree back to the beginning. We'll jump into the story in **Genesis 3**.

i) **The Offspring (Genesis 3:15)**

(1) Adam and Eve have **believed the serpent's lies** and **failed to trust in God's word and provision**. They heard the same whisper we hear today, "*Did God really say?*" And they believed the lie.

(2) Sin has consequences and among the consequences we find a promise in verse 15.

(a) God says to the lying serpent, "*I will put **hostility** between you and the woman, and **between your offspring and her offspring**. He will **strike your head** and you will **strike his heel**.*"

(3) Here are the **two families** in Genesis 3. The **offspring of the serpent** and the **offspring of the woman**. The devil's children and God's children.

(4) And we have a promise that one day the **true offspring of the woman, the one true Son of God**, will **crush** the serpent's head.

(5) It'll serve us well to trace this offspring throughout the pages of the scriptures. We don't have time today to hit every stop and visit

every story of the the promised offspring, but what a wonderful promise.

- (6) What a breath of life and fresh air to know this and then come up on some lengthy genealogies in your bible reading plan! Trace the offspring!
- (7) **So now we know the promise.** Their will be enmity between these **2 families** and **we're looking for an offspring** that will put an **end to the serpent.**
- (8) You get to **chapter 4** and Adam and Even have kids. **Maybe this is a short story?** Not so fast.

j) **The Murder (Genesis 4) (12b)**

- (1) **Cain and Abel bring offerings to God.** Abel's offering is **pleasing** to the Lord but Cain's not so much. Cain is livid. God says "Why you mad, Cain?"
- (a) Genesis 4: verse (6) "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent? If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door."
- (2) Does that language remind you of anything? **Maybe 1 John 3:10** —"*Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother...*"
- (3) Oh boy, **spoiler alert:** Cain kills Abel.
- (4) **From the same earthly mom and dad, we have both an offspring of the serpent and an offspring of God.**
- (5) From Genesis 4, we begin to understand that natural bloodlines don't automatically make us children of God.
- (6) But didn't the offspring we were rooting for just get murdered? Don't worry, the promise is not lost.

- (7) God gives Adam and Eve **another son. Seth**. I know you know this because you're well versed in bible genealogies but Seth makes in appearance in the genealogy of Jesus in Luke. **God's promise remains**.
- (8) *So we're able to trace this back to the beginning, back to the fall in Genesis. John gives us an explanation in the second part of verse 12 that provides the background for verse 13.*
- (9) **WHY** did Cain murder Abel? *"Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous."*
- (a) Hebrews 11:4 tells us that the **differentiating** mark between Cain and Abel was **faith**. **Abel had faith** and he was counted as righteous and **Cain did not**.
- (10) The **reason** for the murder is the enmity, the hostility **between** the offspring in the promise.
- (11) The offspring of the serpent and the offspring of God are **at odds**, and the serpent is **forever grasping** at the chance to **strike the heel of God's offspring**.
- (12) Satan, through his offspring is *continually* trying to **upset the promise**. As you read through the pages of scripture you continually find examples of the **serpent's offspring** trying to **cut off the offspring of God**.
- (13) Fast forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the death blow to the serpent's head has been struck.
- (14) *Until the day of final deliverance, the mortally wounded serpent slithers about, seeking a heel to strike.*

(15) John thinks it's important for us to know this. We ought to be aware and informed. We ought to be **on guard**. We need to recognize the marks of these two families and know their history.

(16) We need to know **our own place in the grand narrative of God's offspring crushing the serpent's head**.

TRANSITION: so now that we're up to speed background, we can keep exploring what sets these two families apart.

Remember that **CAIN'S FAMILY IS MARKED BY HOSTILITY TOWARD GOD'S CHILDREN**. And so we arrive at Verse 13.

B. Family Traits: Evidences of Life and Death (13-15)

1. Do Not Be Surprised (13)

- a) **"Do not be surprised."** **"Stop being surprised"** that the world hates you. WHY NOT be surprised?
- b) Well, if we understand how **the curse** and **the promise** in Genesis 3 carry over throughout history, **we won't be surprised at the hostility**.
- c) God's children can **expect to be hated** by the offspring of the serpent.
- d) Cain is a prototype of the world.
 - (1) In Cain, we can easily see the **impulse** behind the serpent's offspring. It's not just that we're an inconvenience.
 - (2) To the serpent, God's children are the **constant reminder of his defeat** by the true offspring.
- e) Enmity between offspring (Jn 15:18-19)
 - (1) Listen to Jesus' words in (Jn 15:18-19)

(a) *"If the world hates you, understand that **it hated me before it hated you**. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, **because you are not of the world**, but I have chosen you out of it, **the world hates you.**"*

(2) **Jesus is not surprised by the world's hostility.** He knows what's going on. He knows the hostility between the serpent, his offspring, and God's family.

(a) In John 17 Jesus prays, *"I have given them your word. The world hated them because they are not of the, just as I am not of the world. I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."*

(3) **Christian, hear this:** we need to **stop being surprised** at the world's hostility toward us. We need to **stop looking to the world to welcome us and accept us**. We need to **stop thinking of the world as our home**.

(4) **We are not from here. We are ambassadors here.**

(5) We ought to seek the good of the city just as Israel was commanded in exile, but we should know what family we belong to.

(6) And we should know **what kind of reception to expect** from the world, from the serpent's offspring, from CAIN'S FAMILY.

(7) Listen to the words of Martin Niemoller, a German pastor and one of the founders of the Confessing Church during the Nazi Regime:

(a) *The fellowship of Jesus has **no promise** that it will ever be in the majority; we must indeed guard against thinking that there can ever be any kind of human security or assurance against the world's hatred. All parleys, all truces, all peace treaties are unreal, for the world must hate the Christian fellowship; and*

because of the fellowship, so long as it is a Christian fellowship, cannot hate, it must suffer at the hands of the world...The motto of the community of Jesus is: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed." It is indeed a conquered world which seeks to terrify us; it is indeed a condemned and dying hatred which attacks us.

- (8) Before we move on, I want to point out that **while** the text calls us to not be **surprised at the world's hatred**, *while* the text is informing us **WHY** the world hates us, **we are never called to respond in like**.
- (9) We are never called to retaliate or to meet hatred with defensiveness or self-preservation.
- (10) We are not absolved of **loving the lost** with the **same love** that **Jesus** has for them.
- (11) There are only two families, yes. **But is our God not in the business of changing which family people belong to?**
- (12) Didn't we all at one time belong to **Cain's family before God intervened?**
- (13) Consider the Apostle Paul's testimony.
- (a) By all accounts, a child of the devil, hating and persecuting God's children, killing them.
 - (b) That is until Jess stepped in his path (literally) and brought him from death to life.
 - (c) Once a child of Satan, counted among the serpent's offspring, now made alive and counted in God's family.

(d) Isn't this every Christian's testimony? None of us were made alive by virtue of human bloodlines. Let us never forget this.

(14) What's your posture toward the world? Are you tempted to seek its approval? Do you long to be accepted? Or perhaps do you feel resentment towards the world because of the hostility? Are you meeting the world's hostility with your own or do you see them as Jesus does, who came to seek and save the lost?

TRANSITION: Let's keep exploring the family tree. We know that CAIN'S FAMILY has roots all the way back the cursing of the serpent. We know this family is in enmity with God's children. What else does the text tell us?

2. From Death to Life, evidenced by Love (14)

a) Well, at this point, we begin to see John's main idea, that **Love for God's People is evidence of which family we belong to**. *Love or a lack thereof are identifying markers, they are family traits.*

b) Brotherly love gives us assurance of salvation (14a)

(1) **For the believer**, love for brothers and sisters in Christ is an **assurance of being spiritually alive**.

(a) John says we can **know** that we have passed from death to life **BECAUSE** we love the brothers and sisters in Christ. This love is **EVIDENCE** of the life within.

(b) **If we are alive in Christ, we will love his people**. The end.

c) A lack of love evidences spiritual death (14b)

- (1) The **inverse** tells us something too. *"The one who does not love remains in death."* Do you feel the weight of this statement?
- (2) **Lacking in love** and specifically lacking love **for God's people** is evidence of **spiritual death**. It is evidence that someone has **not** passed from death to life but rather **REMAINS** in death.
- (3) If they were alive, they would love. But they are not alive. They are dead, so they hate. **Love and hate are evidence of our family ties**. The absence of love is synonymous with hatred here. This is the essence of the hostility between CAIN'S FAMILY and CHRIST'S.
- (4) What does your life attest to? Is your love obvious? Can everyone tell that you look like your father? Do you love God's people?**

3. Hatred, Murder and the Lack of Spiritual Life (15)

a) Jesus equated hate with murder (Mt. 5:21)

- (1) Verse 15 tells us *"Everyone who hates his brother or sister is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him."*
- (2) There's a **parallel** between this statement and Jesus' words in Matthew 5.
- (3) We're reminded in both that **God knows the heart**. And **from the heart comes the fruit**.
- (4) Murder begins in the heart. It stems from anger and hatred.
- (5) John is not letting us dismiss the argument. *"Well, I haven't literally killed anybody so OBVIOUSLY this isn't about me. I'm good."* Not so fast!
- (6) Murder is **downstream** from hatred but they **share a sinful root**. And to cultivate that root is evidence of spiritual death.

- (7) *"No murderer has eternal life residing in him"* We ought to feel the weight here.
- (8) This is not to be taken lightly. John isn't saying, *"You know what would be nice? If Christians were nice to each other. That would be nice. Wouldn't everybody just feel better if we did that? Let's give it a try."*
- (9) **NO! Life and death hang in the balance.** To love is evidence of life and to not love, to hate, is akin to murder and it is evidence of death!
- (10) **It matters profoundly which family you are in.**

b) Present tense indicates ongoing and current condition

- (1) It's worth noting here that 'hates' is in **the present tense**. This indicates an **ongoing and current condition**.
- (2) Why is this important? I think it points to a truth we addressed earlier when we talked about Paul's conversion.
- (3) John is addressing the current condition of hearts. If Jesus has saved us then we **HATED, past tense**. It no longer convicts us. We can look instead to the **present fruit** of love for God's people to **reassure** us.
- (4) But also it points to the reality that God saves sinners and **may yet** save those who are **currently** in CAIN'S FAMILY.
- (5) Do we pray for those who hate us? Do we ask God to bring them from death to life? Do we pray for their hate to be transformed to the love that marks God's family?
- (6) Hatred and murder can be washed by His blood.
- (7) Do we rest assured in God's work? Are we cultivating the fruit of love in our own lives?

(8) Murder in the heart and eternal life are mutually exclusive.

(9) Are we uprooting any vestiges of hatred in our lives? DID YOU MURDER ANYBODY THIS WEEK ON TWITTER? DID YOU MURDER IN YOUR HEART WHEN YOU REPOSTED THAT MEME?

TRANSITION: Ok, so we've got a good picture of CAIN'S FAMILY. We've even started to explore some of the contrasts with CHRIST'S FAMILY, but what else does the text tell us about God's Children?

What is Jesus' family like?

III. CHRIST'S FAMILY is formed and defined by love in action (16-18)

A. Joining the Family: The Love We Have Known (16a)

1. Verse 16: "This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us."
2. We **know** love **because** God has loved us in Jesus.
 - a) This is how we are to define love, this is our standard.
 - b) There's a lot of **confusion** today about *what love is*.
 - c) We're bombarded on every front with **wrong ideas** about love.
 - (1) Love is getting to do whatever you want.
 - (2) Love is being free of obligation.
 - (3) Love is sex.
 - (4) Love is bodies as commodities.
 - (5) Love is a feeling and it is fleeting.
 - d) **But what does the Bible say?**
 - (1) How good are we at identifying false love and rejecting it? Or do we let our guard down and let it seep in? Is love just something you feel? Or is it something you do? Is love something that just

happens or is it something you cultivate? Why don't we let God's word define it for us? "This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us."

- e) **Love is self-sacrifice for the good of another.** We can know love because we have been loved by God.
- f) We have been loved in a **specific** way.
 - (1) We have been loved by God through **his own self-sacrifice** in Jesus on the cross.
 - (2) Love is an action. To quote the **90s philosophers, DC Talk,**
 - (a) *"I don't care what you say, I don't care what you heard. The word love, love is a verb."*
 - (b) I'm not sure if we should expect the worship team to lead us in a corporate rendition of that particular jam, but you can **ask Brogan and Nate** for a cover after the service.
- g) It matters that we understand love in this way.
 - (1) We who belong to God's family are called to love one another.
 - (2) We are called to do this as his ambassadors. We bear witness **OF** God's love **TO** the world **BY HOW** we love one another.
 - (3) Jesus tells us this in John 13:35, *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*
- h) It's important that we **not confuse** love.
 - (1) That's why we must know how **God defines love** and the **love we are called to.**
 - (2) We shouldn't confuse God's love and the love we are commanded to have for our brothers and sisters with the **factious "love"** that the **world** has in its cliques.

- (3) There is nothing radical or prophetic about people who are **like each other** defending their own clan, **preserving their self-interest** in a group.
- (4) Any old Joe can do that without the Holy Spirit changing their hearts.
- (5) What is radical about the love of Christians for each other is that **Christians are not united to each other by any natural affiliations.**
- (a) It's not **natural family**, it's not **country**, not **ethnicity**, not **social or economic status**, not **common interest**.
- (b) What binds Christians to one another is **exclusively**, the blood of Jesus.
- (c) That is what gathers us together into a **family**.
- (6) So this brotherly love bears a **revolutionary witness** to a **watching world**.
- (7) It matters how we understand love and how we live it out, because as God's ambassadors to the darkness, **WE ARE HOW THEY SEE JESUS IN THE WORLD.**
- (8) We are how the lost see Jesus in the world.**
- i) Our love for one another **MUST rise above** shared natural interests.
- (1) It's fine to love (and like) Christians who agree with you on every point, or look like you, or whom you feel comfortable around.
- (2) But we can't **reduce** brotherly love to **just** that.
- (3) That same love **MUST** extend to the Christian who **disagrees with you**, the one you **just don't get**, the one who **makes you uneasy** or maybe **even irritated**, the one who **voted for the other guy**.
- (4) Yeah, I said it. **You're called to love that christian too.**

(5) We have to strive for this love **for the sake of our witness.**

j) "Well, that's fine Manny, but what if I just don't like some of these Christians? They're my family but do I have to like them?"

(1) David Allen may be of some help here.

(a) He says, "*Liking is a matter of personal preference. Loving is a matter of obedience to Christ and the Word of God. Love penetrates beyond the superficial and moves to the essence of the person. It overcomes obstacles and excuses. Love sees beyond what it does not like in a person and minimizes it in order to see the person as Christ sees him. Then seeing the person in that way opens the door to acting toward that person in a Christlike way. Loving people you don't like means treating them as if you did like them! You choose to act toward them in a way that is pleasing to Christ and that exhibits how Christ would act toward them. The nature of Christian love is that it acts, it gives, it expresses itself toward others.*"

k) This isn't a matter of hypocrisy. It's simply doing what is right, as children of God.

3. **TRANSITION:** Here we're moving toward the very practical. Where the rubber meets the road. If we're going to follow the family footsteps, we have an example to live out. The example of Jesus.

B. **Following the Family Footsteps: The Example to Live Out** (16b-18)

1. We *ought* to lay our lives down (16b)

a) "*We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*"

That's the standard.

b) You have been loved with this kind of love, **now you must live it out too.** We would affirm that. **But how do we live it?**

c) What does it **mean** to lay our lives down?

(1) On the obvious level, it means giving up your actual life for another.

(2) This is expressed in the classic idiom, "*I would take a bullet for you.*"

(3) I believe the scriptures would affirm that sentiment. We're told this in John 15, "*No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.*"

(4) But **do we need to wait** for the proverbial bullet in order to jump in front of it? Is that **ALL** that this kind of love entails?

d) An analogy from marriage

(1) **Imagine you're married.** Some of you actually are married so it shouldn't be too hard to imagine.

(2) You make your vows. You tell your spouse, "*Baby I would die for you! I would take a bullet for you. I will defend you from robbers with a greater intensity than Kevin in Home Alone.*" Great.

(3) But are you now just going to **sit around and wait** for burglars to come in so you can prove your love?

(4) Are there not **other opportunities** to give evidence of your love? Some of you need to hear this.

(5) Can you not take out to the trash or get off the couch? Can you not put your phone down and engage your spouse? Can you not think of something that would serve them and then do that thing, unprompted, without a special occasion, and with a gracious attitude?

(6) **You don't need to wait for the opportunity to give the ultimate sacrifice to show your love.** You can prove your love TODAY. And you should.

e) John doesn't seem to think literally dying for somebody is all that we're called to do to live out the love we have received from Jesus.

2. Seeing and meeting the need (17)

a) John moves **from the supreme** sacrifice of dying for someone **to the very earthy** application. *"If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need..."*

b) What are the **world's goods**?

(1) The world's goods doesn't imply riches. This isn't a command to the wealthy alone.

(2) The world's good implies the basics of a livelihood.

(3) *Do you have enough to share?* I suspect the answer for the vast majority of us is yes.

(4) *We have enough to share without starving our kids, without losing our homes, without having our cars repossessed.*

(5) I would encourage you to extrapolate here beyond just the material. You can give more than your money. You can give more than goods. Give your time. Give your ears. Give your talents. Give your voice for those that aren't heard. Do you have something that another lacks? Do you possess a good of the world that your brother or sister doesn't? What the example we have in Christ?

c) **Seeing is knowing**

(1) And what does it mean to **see** a fellow believer in need? It means **to know**.

(2) It means entering into the lives of others.

(3) This isn't throwing some coins at a need. This isn't love at a distance.

(4) This is **knowing a person and their need** and loving them with God's love in **very practical ways**, including with our material resources.

(5) To do otherwise is to close our hearts against them. (ESV)

d) Withholding compassion incompatible with God's love

(1) If anyone has what they need to survive, if anyone has what they need to get by ok in life, "*and sees a fellow believer who is in need and withholds compassion, [closes his heart against].....**how does God's love reside in him?***"

(a) The question is rhetorical.

(b) To withhold compassion, to close your heart is **INCOMPATIBLE** with God's love abiding in your heart.

(c) To withhold compassion is to choose **against love**.

(d) To close your heart is to **show the traits** of CAIN'S FAMILY, not CHRIST'S.

(2) God's love options [SKIP IF SHORT ON TIME]

(a) Love for God or love from God. Both supported in Johannine writing. Doesn't change the meaning of the text.

(3) **TRANSITION**: It's clear that John understands love as something you do. It requires an action. And this is clear in the next verse, where John commands love to be in action and in truth.

3. Love necessitates action

a) "*Little children, let us not love in word or speech...*" It's almost as if John anticipates our tendency to **reduce love** to feelings or words, to reduce it to the **intangible**.

(1) It's easy for us to say we love someone in the **abstract**.

(2) Listen to this quote from **GP Lewis**:

(a) *"It is easier to be enthusiastic about Humanity with a capital "H" than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved, or otherwise unattractive. Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular."*

(3) Are we guilty of this? Of loving only in the abstract, only with words, only when it requires no work or action from us?

(4) **Who** do you love? **Who** are you loving? **What** are you doing to bless them? **How** are you serving them?

b) Loving "in truth" means **loving in action** and loving in truth is set in **contrast** against loving in word.

c) All that to say that **for love to be true, it necessitates action**. Love that is only words isn't love. **It's empty talk**.

d) It is not enough to say words **about** love. **Love is something we must do**.

(1) This brings to mind **James 2:15-16** where faith that is only expressed in well-wishing words to someone in need is **insufficient**.

(a) Faith results in action, in works.

(b) Love similarly is a product of faith, of being welcomed into God's family, and it requires action.

IV. SUMMATION

A. There are **only two families** we can belong to. CAIN'S FAMILY or CHRIST'S FAMILY.

- B. The family we belong to has **eternal ramifications**.
- C. The family we belong to marks the difference **between life and death**.
- D. From the very beginning, God has been **creating a people for himself**.
- E. In his loving provision, he has set hostility between the offspring of the serpent and his own children, **to set them apart**.
- F. **His promise stands true**, having sent his true son, Jesus, to crush the head of the serpent and **welcome all who believe and trust** into this new family.
- G. The serpent and his offspring are **marked by their hatred** of God and his offspring.
- H. The children of God are a **constant reminder** of that which they have **rejected and rebelled against**.
- I. Those who **receive** righteousness by **recognizing** their need and **placing** their faith in Jesus **become God's offspring**. They are co-heirs with Christ.
- J. In Jesus they **inherit** all that the Father has given **to him**.
- K. The world will hate them as they hated Jesus and rejected the Father's provision. **But he has overcome the world**.
- L. But that's not the end of the story.
1. **God is in the business of raising the dead to new life**.
 2. He is in the business of making beloved children out of his enemies.
 - a) Listen to Ephesians 2, starting in verse 11

(1) *12 At that time you were **without Christ, excluded** from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 **But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away** have been **brought near by the blood of Christ**. 14 For he is our peace, who made both groups one and **tore down the dividing wall of hostility**. In his flesh, 15 he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and*

*expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, **resulting in peace**. 16 He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death.*

M. Those who are in Christ are **now part of his family**. And **IF WE BELONG TO JESUS' FAMILY, WE WILL LOVE ONE ANOTHER IN TRUTH AND IN ACTION**.

N. Our traits point to our family.

1. CAIN'S FAMILY, the offspring of the serpent are marked by **hatred** for God's people.
2. But CHRIST'S FAMILY is marked by **love, love in action** and not just in words, a love for one another flowing directly from the love we have known in Jesus' sacrificial death.
3. This is love. This is the love of God in Christ. This is the love of Christians for one another.

O. Whose family do we belong to? Do our lives bear the evidence of our family?

V. INVITATION

A. If you're a Christian, the command from scripture is clear.

1. You are to love your fellow believers.
2. You are to love them when it's easy and when it's hard. When you want to and when you don't.
3. You are to love them because you have been loved and you are to love them HOW you have been loved by God.
4. Brothers and sisters, let us love one another in truth. In actuality. In reality.

5. Let us love one another not just with words. Let us love one another with sacrifice.
6. With the greatest sacrifice when necessary, but daily with all the smaller sacrifices of bearing with one another and sharing in affliction.
7. I pray you will see how love for the brothers and sisters you find difficult, awkward, and painful is part of your witness.

8. May the unbelieving world see a glorious and accurate picture of Jesus in our love.

B. If you're not a Christian, there are only two families.

1. All of us who are in God's family at one point were not.
2. None of us were born into God's family. We were all welcomed in.
3. Friend, there is room for you in God's family.
4. I pray you will see the lavish love that God has given to his children in Jesus and hear the invitation to come in.
5. There is no one good but Jesus. There is no one deserving to inherit God's promise but Jesus.
6. All of us are needy and undeserving.
7. Will you turn to Jesus and place your trust in him instead of yourself?
Will you come toward love?
8. We long to call you brother and sister.

VI. PRAYER

A. Lord, we come to you today in humility. We who are your children recognize that there have been many times when we have failed to look like our Father. We have failed to love our brothers and sisters with the impartial love we have received in Jesus. We have picked favorites and allowed our hearts to grow cold toward some whom you shed your blood

for. Forgive us. We bring our sin before you. We confess it, we renounce it. We repent. We are grateful, God, that you are not finished with us. Grow our love for our brothers and sisters and teach us how to live it out. May we not love one another with the emptiness of words, but with the undeniable witness of action and truth. Lord, for those who are not in Christ's family. Save them. Rescue them from the clutches of the serpent. Show them the truth, that they may reject the lie. Bring them to the family table. Save those who are your enemies, as you do. You are good and loving, Lord. Show them your mercy that we may have more brothers and sisters. May your name be praised in all the world.