

Love: It's a Matter of Doing It

1 John 3:16-18

In the book, "Children's Letters to God: The New Collection", a little girl named, Nan, writes this letter: "*Dear God, I bet it is very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only four people in our family and I have trouble loving them!*"

Here are some other statements from an article called, "What Is Love—From a Kid's Point of View." So, What is love, from a kid's point of view?

- a. "When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."
- b. "When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth."
- c. "Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is okay."
- d. "Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen."
- e. "Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well."
- f. "Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day."
- g. "You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget."

It's a good question for today isn't it? What is love? Last week as we studied in 1 John 3 we saw that love is serious business, it's a matter of life and death. Love is the major characteristic of the child of God. Love is the evidence that we have been born again. Verse 14 says, "**We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.**"

This week we are going to see that love is a matter of doing it.

Am I Acting in Love? (vv.16-18).

I. Love Will Sacrifice (v.16).

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

1. In v.16, John says, "**by this we know love.**" In other words, "by this we can verify love." We don't have to wonder what love looks like. Jesus demonstrated it on the cross. Love is an unconditional sacrifice.

2. Jesus is "**the propitiation for our sins**" (2:2). Rom.5:8 says, "**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**"

A little boy asked his father to explain love. The father pointed to the boy's dog that was often neglected and abused. He said, "**Love is wagging your tail even when you are mistreated.**"

3. Love is doing what is right for someone else even when you are mistreated. Jesus "**laid down His life.**" He divested Himself of life. "**Laid down**" is a word that is used of taking

off clothes. He said in Jn.15:13, "**Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.**"

4. Just as Cain was the perfect illustration of hate, Jesus is the perfect example of love. Hate leads us to do terrible things; love leads us to do good things. Hate seeks harm; love seeks to bless. Hate destroys; love builds up. Hate wants to divide; love wants to reconcile. Hate wants to kill; love wants to impart life.

5. This verse tells us that the sacrifice of Jesus is not an act to be admired, but an example to be followed. We "**ought [to be willing] to lay down our lives for the brethren.**"

6. Phil.2:5 says, "**Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus**" (NIV). 1 Pet 2:21 says, "**For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.**"

Scottish soldier Ernest Gordon wrote about his experiences as a prisoner of war in World War II in the book, "MIRACLE ON THE RIVER KWAI." His Japanese captors were extremely cruel to the POWs.

Each day Gordon and his fellow prisoners were forced to build a railroad track bed through low-lying swampland. If a prisoner appeared to lag, a Japanese guard would beat him to death or decapitate him. Many more men simply dropped dead from exhaustion, malnutrition, and disease. Ultimately, 80,000 prisoners died.

Being treated worse than animals, the POWs had degenerated to barbarous behavior, but one afternoon something happened to change that.

A shovel was missing. The officer in charge became enraged. He demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun and threatened to kill them all on the spot . . . It was obvious the officer meant what he had said. Then, finally, one man stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel, and beat the man to death. When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no shovel was missing. Indeed, there never had been a shovel missing. Someone had miscounted at the first check point.

The word spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others! . . . The incident had a profound effect. . . The men began to treat each other like brothers. "When the victorious Allies swept in, the survivors, human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors . . (and instead of attacking their captors) insisted: 'No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness.'" One man laid down his life for his brothers.

Love will sacrifice. John says we "**ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**" And certainly to "**lay down our lives**" could mean to die for each other. And if that is asked of you, John says we ought to be willing. But for the vast majority of us, we will never be called upon to die for anyone.

So what does it mean for you and me today? Well, maybe that's why John takes it right down to the day-to-day decisions for us. To "**lay down our lives**" means more than

simply dying for someone. It means laying aside our desires and needs so that we can meet the needs of others.

II. Love Will Show Compassion (v.17).

“But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

1. Love may not require us to literally give our lives but it does require us to give what has value in our lives to enrich the lives of others. To give what we have is the same principle as the love of the cross only at a lower intensity.
2. John goes from the plural **"brethren"** in v.16 to the singular **"his brother"** in v.17. He moves from a general application toward all believers to a specific application for a particular brother.
3. C. S. Lewis said, **"Loving everybody in a general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular."** John wants us to love somebody in particular.
4. First, John assumes that the Christian **"has this world's goods."** We may not be wealthy but we have something to share.
5. Second, the he assumes that the Christian **"sees his brother in need."** "Sees" means "to gaze intently." We see thousands of needs but this means to see a need and receive a burden.
6. To see a brother in need places us with an inescapable responsibility. If you are abiding in Christ, you will be moved when He is moved. And God is always moved to action.
7. The Lord tells you not to **"shut up your heart."** Don't close the door on the burden. If you **"shut up your heart"** you have no compassion. A closed heart may prove that you have no fellowship with God .
8. John R.W. Stott said, **"As life does not dwell in the murderer, so love does not dwell in the miser."**
9. Now I am sure there have been times when you and I have failed to help someone in need when we could have done something for them. Just because you didn't help one person does not mean that you have no love. But if you habitually, characteristically refuse to help fellow believers in need you need to examine yourself. You need to ask the question John asks, "Does the love of God abide in me?"
10. Remember Jesus' words in Mat.25:45, **"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me."**

Are you acting in love?

III. Love Will Take Action (v.18).

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

1. Actions always speak louder than words. If our love is genuine it will be constructive. The love of God is measured by your actions not just your speech.
2. Let's turn to Ja.2:15-17.

15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

D.L Moody used to describe a little boy from Chicago who attended S.S. in a particular church. When his parents moved to another part of the city the little fellow still attended the same Sunday school, although it meant a long, tiresome walk each way. A friend asked him why he went so far, and told him that there were plenty of others just as good nearer his home. **"They may be as good for others, but not for me,"** was his reply. **"Why not?"** she asked. **"Because they love a fellow over there,"** he replied.

Concord Baptist Church pastor Ronel Mesidor had left his Port-au-Prince office at Compassion International, a Christian child advocacy ministry, at 4:30 p.m. Jan. 12 to drive to his home in nearby Carrefour. Before he was halfway there, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake that has claimed the lives of more than 150,000 people shook Haiti.

It was the next morning before Mesidor could make his way on foot through collapsed buildings, crushed cars and dead bodies to arrive at his church in Carrefour, a Port-au-Prince suburb about 12 miles south of the capital. He heaved a sigh of relief when he found his wife, Manise, there and unhurt. He soon learned his five children were OK as well. Miraculously, the church and his house, located on the same block, were intact.

But the earthquake has taken its toll on the 250-member Concord congregation. Eight church members died as a result of the disaster, leaving four children as orphans. In addition, 100 members suffered broken bones, 130 homes were destroyed and 45 damaged.

People who had lost their homes soon began arriving at the church — they had nowhere else to go. Manise, a nurse, turned the Mesidor home into a clinic to care for the injured. When space ran out, the pastor opened the church.

"I think God left us alive for a special reason," Mesidor said. "Because these people need someone to take care of them."

Carrefour is known as a dangerous place to live because of gang violence and other crime. Plus, nearly 4,000 inmates escaped from a nearby prison damaged in the earthquake. But Mesidor has noticed a change in the community since Jan. 12 — people are more subdued. Regardless, these are the people the pastor is dedicated to serving.

People continue flocking to the church in search of medical care, food and a word of encouragement. It has become a hub of grass-roots relief activity. One of the pastor's friends with medical experience is treating people in the makeshift clinic set up in the sanctuary. Manise helps prepare food for all the workers. And church members help clear rubble around the building.

Pastor Mesidor says, "I still believe we should show them the love of Christ." "Once they understand who God is, they will know how to love others. This is why the church is here."

Isn't that why our church is here? To show people the love of Christ?

I am reminded of a poem that says: I asked Jesus, "How much do you love me?" "This much", he answered. Then he opened up his arms and died.