



WEEK 3 TEXT: 1 John 3:11–24 (ESV)

WEEK 3 MAIN POINT: Love is not a feeling. Love is a doing.

SERIES RECAP

John wrote this letter we call “First John.” The point of the letter is easy. He gave us the answer in 1 John 5:13 (ESV)

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”

John wants his readers to REALIZE they have eternal life. He wants that to be something that is constantly in their minds. Eternal life begins when you start following Jesus.

In the first week, we learned that John said some people are walking in light, and some people are walking in darkness. If we’re being honest, we see both light and dark in us. John said that if we confess our sins to Jesus, He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9).

In the second week, we looked at some lawyer videos. John sort of paints this picture of a courtroom. If we have any darkness, we need a good lawyer. Jesus, the Righteous, is our advocate. Not only is He our lawyer, He also paid the entire debt the court says we owe.

Most people reduce Jesus, the church, faith, religion—or whatever else you call it that we are doing—down to a trip to heaven when we die. But what are you supposed be doing between now and your death? John seems to think that our eternal life is more than waiting to die; it’s something we begin living out from the moment we confess Christ as Lord.

This week, we’re going to look at what John thinks we should be doing, and it turns out that this thing isn’t just something to do, but is actually evidence that Christ is at work in us.

1 John 3:11 (ESV)

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

Everybody knows we're supposed to love each other. Nobody in here—even if this is your first week to ever be in church—is surprised that the Bible says we are supposed to love each other. We know the Bible teaches this. John seems to think it's important. But what is "love"?

[Author Note: I showed a video of people answering the question, "What is love?" Their definitions are all over the place. The video is not necessarily from a Christian point of view, but it gives a great overview of the different views people have. Here it is if you want to use it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-9kDodq2x0>

According to people's theories, love is ...

- a feeling
- a floor underneath you
- the warm fuzzies
- the best version of you
- blah blah blah

Everyone has a definition of love. The Bible constantly says we should love one another. But none of us can agree what love is, and if it's going to be on the test, maybe we should figure out what John thinks love is.

[Author Note: Share about some of the things you "love."]

I love my son. I love my wife. I love tacos. I love my truck. I love Oreo cookies. But those "loves" don't all mean the same thing, do they? So, what is love? Let's find out.

1 John 3:12–15 (ESV)

¹² 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. ¹³ Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone

who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

John says we don't want to be like Cain. Duh. Cain was evil and he murdered. John says that we don't want to be a murderer. Duh. We already know these things.

But then John says everyone who hates his brother is a murderer? Uh oh. Verse 14 says, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers." **That means your ability to love is not only something we should do, but it's actually direct evidence that God has changed you and is changing your heart.**

1 John 3:16 (ESV)

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

[**Author Note:** I drew a connection between John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16. It may be fun to discuss here how the Bible got its chapter and verse marks. I was running out of time and skipped that.]

Did you see that? Love isn't a feeling you get when you eat pizza. Love isn't the feeling you get when you look at someone you like. Love isn't the warm fuzzies. Love isn't even the feeling I have when a Taco Bell commercial comes on. John says that we know love because Jesus laid down His life for me. **Love is laying down your life. Love isn't a feeling ... it's a doing.**

What are you doing to lay down your life for another? What can you do to lay down your life for someone at your school? What are you willing to do to lay down your life for someone at your school?

1 John 3:17–18 (ESV)

¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

John teaches us that part of loving someone is giving our goods to meet their needs. For you, your cash may be low, but maybe you can give your time, move across the cafeteria to sit with someone who looks lonely,

decide to invite someone to a pickup game of football, etc. If you have the ability to meet a need, you should meet that need. Verse 18 says, “Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” **Love is putting your money where your mouth is.**

1 John 3:19–22 (ESV)

¹⁹ By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰ for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. ²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²² and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

When we love other people—not just have good feelings about someone, but lay down our lives for others and work to meet their needs—when we love other people this way, John says in verse 19 that we are reassuring our heart. **Another way to say that may be that when we love others, we REALIZE God has changed us.**

Sometimes we feel like God loves us. That’s true; God does love us. Sometimes we don’t feel like God loves us. In those times, God doesn’t care; He still loves us. John says in verse 20 that God is greater than our heart. We don’t love people to prove to God we are worth loving. **We love people to be obedient, and as a side perk, it ends up proving that God has changed our heart.** God’s love for us isn’t based on our feelings. Your feelings change so quickly.

Verse 21 says that there is a season of life when we can have confidence before God. How cool would it be to look yourself in the mirror and have confidence in who you are in Christ? That’s what John says is possible.

1 John 3:23 (ESV)

And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

We are commanded to do two things: 1. Believe in the name of Jesus, and 2. love one another.

God commands us to love. He doesn’t command us to do things like breathe. Imagine going around holding your breath. Or forgetting to breathe because nobody reminded you. Then, you gasp for air because someone

commanded it. If God is commanding us to have the warm fuzzies about someone, that wouldn't make sense. I can't change my feelings on command.

But if God is commanding me to love others by laying down my life, that makes sense. I can do that whether I feel like it or not ... and it's expected that as a follower of Jesus I do that regardless of how I feel about it.

1 John 3:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

John reminds us that we can know that the Holy Spirit abides in us when we keep His commandment to love others.

This isn't a new lesson, but it's something we need to be reminded of over and over again. That's why the Bible keeps repeating this same point. If you ask Jesus, "What is the most important commandment?" His response is, "Love God and love others." If you ask Micah, "What does God want from me?" his response is to "do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God."

The first two are about loving others, the third about loving God. If you ask James, "What is pure religion?" his response is, "caring for orphans and widows in their time of need, and keeping yourself unstained from this world." God just keeps repeating Himself on this point.

Love the name of Jesus, because He can transform your life. As evidence that He has transformed your life, you will begin to love others.

If we see with REAL EYES, we know that:

- There is eternal life in Jesus.
- If we ask, He forgives.
- If we need help, He is our defense lawyer and our payment.
- We should love because we are loved.
- Love isn't a feeling, it's a doing.
- My love for others is evidence of God changing me.