

How's Your Love Life?

1 John 3:11-18

Pastor John Miller

I want to read the entire text in one setting. So begin following with me in your Bibles at verse 11. John says, "This is the message that we have heard from him from the beginning, or we have heard from the beginning, excuse me, that we should love one another not as Cain, which was of that wicked one and slew his brother." And why did he slay his brother? Because his own works were evil and his brothers were righteous. "So marvel not, or don't be surprised, my brethren," he's speaking to the believers, "If the world hates you." We know something. We know that we have passed from death and to life because we love the brethren. "And he that love not his brother, abides in death, and whosoever hates his brother," verse 15, "Is a murderer." And you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Now this is how we know the love of God or this is how we know what love is because he laid down his life for us. We ought to also lay down our lives for the brethren. But whosoever has this world's goods and sees his brother have need, and he closes his heart of compassion toward him, how can the love of God dwell in him? My little children let us not love in word neither in tongue, but indeed and in truth. John has divided the world and the entire human race into two families. One he calls the family of God, the other one he calls the family of the devil. He calls one the children of God and the other group are the children of the devil. I want you to back up in chapter three, one verse verse 10 and I'll show you what I'm talking about.

John says in this, "The children of God are manifested and the children of the devil. Whosoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother." Now there are themes packed in that 10th verse. The first theme is we have the children of God and we have the children of the devil. You are either God's child or the devil's child. You are either a child of God or you are a child of Satan. You become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. When you trust him as your savior and the spirit of God gives you new life, you are born again into God's family and you become his child. If you haven't trusted Christ and born again, then you are classified as a child of the devil.

Now there are birthmarks in each family. How do we know the children of God and how do we know the children of the devil? John tells us that the children of God have two birthmarks. The first one is righteousness, the second one is love. And those two themes are mentioned in that 10th verse as well. He that does righteousness is of God. He that doesn't do righteousness is not of God. The inference is that you are of the devil. So he tells us also then in closing verse 10, and this is introducing our theme, "He that loveth not his brother." So if you do not love the family of God and the children of God, then you are not a child of God. So two families, children of God, children of the devil. Two marks of the child of God, righteous living and righteous loving. Now he's going to move in to giving us the test of love by contrasting two things. He's going to contrast hate and murder with love and self-sacrifice.

What are the birthmarks of the child of the devil, hate and murder? We see this in the prototype

Cain and we're going to look at that and then we also see that the contrast to that is love and self-sacrifice. So God's people have love and they put aside self for the sake of others. The devil's children have hate and they murder if not outwardly or overtly in the act they do it in their heart by the hatred that they have. So the two birthmarks of the believer are righteousness and love. Now, the way John combines those two birthmarks for the believer righteousness and love is worthy of notice. Because it suggests that where one is the other will be found. A life of righteousness is a life of love, and love is the highest expression of righteousness.

Now I want you to get this. If you are living a righteous life as a birthmark of a child of God, what does that righteous life involve? Simply stated, love. You can't be righteous and unloving. So the two go together. So if you are walking in righteousness, it only stands to reason that you'll also be loving others. Now in the context, I want to make this clear lest I forget. In the context of these verses we've read, the love is primarily speaking of a Christian's love for other Christians. Love of the brethren, love one another. You see how good does that mean we can hate non-Christians? No. Because my neighbor was shooting off awful loud fireworks last night, and I want to buy a box and shoot them back into his yard. No. The Bible says we're even to love our enemies, and those might be people living in your own house. We're to love others.

So we are to have love for other Christians and we're to have love for even non-Christians, unbelievers, even the world Jesus said, love your enemies. Jesus said it like this, "By this, shall all men know you are my disciples or you are the children of God." That you have love one for another. Not by your bumper stickers, not by your haircut, not by the clothes, not by a cross around your neck, but that you have love one for another.

Now in our text today, John paints a stark contrast between hatred and murder and love and self-sacrifice. He uses no colors, but black and white. Black and white these are very stark contrast. If you are a true child of God, you'll be marked by a life of love. Now, there are three lessons that we learn from our texts. If you're taking notes, I want you to write them down. The first is that love was the passion of the apostolic message. Love was the passion or you might substitute priority of the apostolic message. Go back with me to verse 11, "For this is the message you've heard from the beginning." There it is. What was the message they heard from the beginning? The message is, is that you love one another.

And this was the preaching of the apostles. They were constantly preaching, love one another, and went all the way back to the Old Testament. It followed up in the life of Christ. It was preached all the way through the epistles. The apostolic passion was, the preaching of love one another. Notice the phrase verse 11. "You heard this from the beginning." The beginning of what? The beginning of their Christian life. The beginning of the apostolic ministry and era. When Paul came into the towns of Ephesus and he preached the gospel, in this area where John is writing to. Paul preached to them that the mark of the Christian is to show love. And by the way, he goes on to say in verse 11, "This is the commandment that you love one another." That is the message. That statement, you love one another is in the Greek what's called an imperative. That means it's a command.

God actually commands us as his children to love each other. I know that's hard. Don't look around the room, it'll freak you out. I got to love him. I got to love her. Yes. But with God's commandments are God's enablements. God never commands us to do something, but what he gives us the strength and the power and the resources to do it. Amen.

Amen.

And we can't love the way God wants us to love without his help, without his strength, without his power. We must rely upon the Holy Spirit if I'm going to love as God wants me to love. So this is the apostolic message that you love one another. Now the word love there in verse 11 is the Greek word *agape* or *agape*. You say, why is that significant? It speaks significant because it means a sacrificial, self-denying, giving love. John 3:16, for God so *agape*. The world, hostile, hatred, rebellious world, God *agaped* the world. Now if God loves the world, then we should love the world as well. We don't love their rebellion, we don't love their sin, but we love them because Christ died for them and they can be redeemed. So we are to love also the brethren and the world.

Turn back real quick and I'll remind you of what we saw earlier in John's epistle to chapter two and verse nine. John repeats these tests to this letter in chapter two verse nine. "He that sayeth he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness even till now." No in between. If you hate your brother, you are in darkness. No if, ands or buts about it. Notice verse 10. "He that loves not his brother abides in the light. He that loveth his brother abides in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling with him. But he that hates his brother is in darkness." Verse 11, "He walks in darkness. He knows not where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes." So John makes it clear that a child of God does not hate, does not murder, does not walk in darkness.

Go back with me to chapter three. The Bible, or excuse me, church history tells us that when John the apostle was old, and when he was riding this epistle, he was probably up around 90 years of age. That he got so old so weak that the people had to carry him into the church. He was the only apostle that did not die a martyr's death. He was persecuted, exiled to Patmos, burning oil, but God kept him alive to a ripe old age, only living apostle. And they would actually on Sunday, the Lord's day, they would pick him up. They would carry him to church. They would prop him up in front of the congregation. Can you imagine coming to church and actually hearing the Apostle John speak? By the way, we're doing that this morning when we read these words.

But I mean being there and they prop him up and John the age would say to the congregation with bated breath their waiting to hear what he would say. He would say, "Little children love one another." And then he would stop and they'd carry him home and put him back to bed and next Sunday they pick him up, they bring him back to church, they prop him up and everybody's going, okay, what's the apostle going to do? He'd say, "Little children love one another." They go, okay, I've heard that before, but that's okay. So the next week they'd bring him back again. They'd prop him up and he'd get ready to speak in there. Oh, what's the apostle going to.... He'd

say, "Little children love one another."

Some of the people were thinking, can't he get a new sermon? Somebody give this dude a new sermon outline. But John knew that this was so important. Which is interesting because he in his early years was known as the son of Thunder. He and his brother James were known as Sons of Thunder because they wanted to call fire down from heaven and roast the Samaritans. It's like going witnessing with a flamethrower. Turn or burn. I don't think that's a good idea. Lord, will you want us to call down fire from heaven and consume them? Jesus said, "You know not what manner spirit I am of. I haven't come to destroy men's lives but to save them." Calm down.

And then years later, now the aged apostle, he was known not as the Son of Thunder but as the apostle of love. Love one another. So it was the priority and it was the passion of the apostles to preach from the beginning that you are to love one another. Then verses 12 and 13, John gives us two negative examples that of the man Cain from the Book of Genesis four, and of the world hating and persecuting God's people. Notice verse 12, he says, "Not as Cain." So there's a contrast there. "We are to love one another. Christians, loving Christians. We're not to be as Cain. Who is of that wicked one that is the devil. He was a child of the devil. And slew his brother. And why did he slay his brother? Because his works were evil and his brothers were righteous.

The second illustration, verse 13, "Marvel not my brethren, if the world hates you." Now, love between Christian brothers is now contrasted with the hatred of Cain for his brother Abel. Now I want to say something before I forget again. And this is a little footnote. I throw these little footnotes into my sermon. I won't charge any extra for them. John writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit around 90 AD believed in the historicity of the Book of Genesis, at least the story of Cain and Abel. Any reason why the rest of the book are the first 11 chapters of the whole Book of Genesis is not historically true, if he believed in Cain and Abel. Even Jesus quoted from the Book of Genesis and believed in their historicity. I say that because a lot of people are saying the Book of Genesis is fairytale.

The garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, serpent talking, man sinning, tower of Babel, Noah and the ark and the flood and all that. It's all a bunch of fairytale. You can't really believe it. John believed it. And John writing under the inspirational Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of truth. And God is a God of the truth and cannot lie, believe that there was a real Cain and there was a real Abel and he uses them as an example of what is hatred and murder evidence that he was the child of the devil.

Now the story is recorded for us in Genesis chapter four. And Adam and Eve, the first two human beings, and I don't think they were Neanderthal or that they were looked like apes. It's funny, a person will find one bone and they'll reconstruct an entire person and what he looked like and how much hair he had from a bone. I'm not sure how you'd do that, but they do it. I believe Adam and Eve were the first human beings. They looked no different than we did. They were just as human as we were. And they had two boys, Cain and Abel. And the time came that they were to offer sacrifice to the Lord. And Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, and Abel

brought a blood sacrifice, one of his lambs, the firstlings of his flock.

And the Bible says that God had respect unto Abel's offering, but he had no respect. He didn't receive Cain's offering. Now the scriptures tell us why. In the book of Hebrews it says that Cain did not offer his sacrifice in faith. Always God must be approached by faith. And no doubt that his fruit sacrifice symbolized human works or human effort. That Cain was rejecting God's way of salvation and he was trying to work his way into heaven, so to speak. That Abel brought the firstling of the flock. He slit its throat, he shed its blood, and it was atoning for his sins. Even as God had to slay an animal to cover Adam and Eve's original sin with a coating.

So God no doubt had prescribed the way by which he could be approached and that was always by faith based on blood. Same is true today. Jesus dies on the cross, he sheds his blood to atone for our sins. How do we get to heaven? By faith in what Jesus did for us. Not by our good works, not by our righteous deeds, not by church attendance, not by water baptism, not by reformation, but by conversion. You have to be born again. So Cain's sacrifice was rejected. Now what did Cain do? He got mad, he got angry. He was filled with jealousy and hatred. And God even saw what he had done and he saw the countenance of Cain's face and he asked him this all time question. He said, "Cain, where's your brother?" Now Cain had already slain his brother. And by the way, the word slew his brother there in our epistle of John, it means actually to slash or to kill with a knife. It means to sacrifice.

So he said to his brother, let's talk out in the field. He got on the field and he massacred his brother. He slew his brother. What a horrible thought. And God says to Cain, "Where is your brother?" God knew where his brother was. God wanted Cain to confess his sin. What did Cain say? "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" You know what the answer is? Yes. Did you know that you and I are our brother's keeper and we need to care for one another and love one another? Not like Cain who was of that wicked one and murdered his brother. And by the way, the first homicide was a domestic violence. Was in the home as is so often as today. And Adam and Eve had two sons. One, a child of God. One following in his own stubborn, rebellious, free will became a child of the devil. Pretty sad.

And instead of showing love and consideration and I'm my brother's keeper, he got angry. And by the way we see it in this text, anger is the seedbed to murder. And God sees anger as the moral equivalent to murder. So if you're pretty comfortable so far in our text thinking, wow, I've never slain anybody. I've never shot anybody. I've never killed anybody. I just hate people. Jesus said, "If you have hatred in your heart towards someone, you have already murdered them." That doesn't mean you go out and do it anyway. Now, okay, well I'm going to go home and kill my neighbor. But that means that you repent of your sin and you get right with God. Your hatred is equal in God's sight unto murder.

So he gives us this example of Cain. Now Cain verse 12 is a prototype. A prototype of what? The children of the devil. And what did the children of the devil do? They persecute, they murder children of God. This would set the tone all the way through history to our very present day. We're watching it almost daily on the news. I'm thinking of Isis and the murder that's going

on, the killing and the slaying that's going on. Children of the devil. God's people being persecuted, the righteous being persecuted by the unrighteous.

You say, well that's not fair. Why didn't God do something? He will. There will be a day of retribution. There will be a day of retribution and we wait for that day and vengeance belongs to God. He will repay. God is going to take care of that situation. But our part is right now as God's people is to love even our enemies. So he gives the negative example of Cain, we're not to be as Cain. And then the negative example of the world, verse 13. "Marvel not," which means don't be surprised. Don't be shocked, don't be freaked out, don't be blown away, "My brethren, if the world hates you." Who's the world? The children of the devil. The evil world system apart from God. The unbelieving evil world system. They hate Christianity. That's why you see it on the television, you see it in the media, you feel it in your culture.

You can have a conversation going on with somebody they're friendly and they're talking. Everything's cool and then you mention Jesus and they go, "What'd you say?" "Do you know Jesus are you... That's happened to me so many times. It always happens to me because I'll be talking to people and they go, "What do you do for a living?" "You really want to know? I'm a pastor." "You're a minister." God haters. Christ hated you. You and those Bible thumping evangelical preacher boys. They freak out. What did I do? Because they hate God. They are living in darkness and you are the light bulb. Man we're having a great time until the Christians showed up. Get that light out of here. You know what happens when you turn the lights on, the bugs run.

J. Vernon McGee, I love it he used to say, "When you preach, it's like going into a barn. He goes, "When I was a boy, I go on the barn and when you take a lantern into a dark barn, two things happen. The rats run and the birds start singing." I love that. And when you bring the gospel of Jesus Christ and the light of the life of love as a child of God, the rats run and the bird starts singing. Don't they? Don't be surprised. Don't be shocked. Every one of the apostles died a martyr's death. What did they do to Jesus? They crucified him. Aren't you his follower? Aren't you living like Christ in this world? You expect them to treat you any differently than Jesus. Jesus said, "If they persecute me, they'll persecute you. If they hated me, they'll hate you. If they rejected me, they're going to reject you." Don't marvel at this.

I'll never forget as a new Christian. I was 19, I'd just gotten saved and I still had all my unsaved friends and I'll never forget. I actually became very bold in my faith and courageous in the Lord and I put a Christian sticker on my car. It was that old ichthus with the Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, the fish. I stuck it on my car and we came out of the house and all my friends saw it on my car. They go, "Is that a Christian sticker on your car?" And I knew that this was the moment. Took a swallow and went, "Yes." "What? You're a Christian. That's ridiculous. You can't believe it." And they all just started blasting me and capping on me and getting down on me and I thought, wow, this is crazy. Everything's cool until they realize that I am a Christian, and all of a sudden I'm the bad guy.

Don't be surprised. Don't marvel if you are persecuted by the world. How wonderful it is to know

that we're the children of God and the world doesn't love us, but it rejected Christ. Jesus said, "So persecuted they the prophets which were before you." So Cain, a prototype of the world and the world persecuting the righteous. In John 3:19 it says, "And this is the condemnation that light is coming into the world, and men love darkness more than light because their deeds were evil."

Let me give you the second truth we learned about love in this text and that is love is the proof that we have passed out of darkness into life. The proof that we have passed out of death and darkness into life. Verse 14 and 15, "We know." What do we know? "And this is we know by experience that we have passed out from death into life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brethren abides in death and whosoever even hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." So here's the contrast. This is how you know that you have become a true Christian. This is how you know have the life that is real. You have passed, it says from death into life.

You know that's what happens to you when you get saved. When you are born again, guess what happens? You go from death to life. From darkness to light. From hate, to love. From the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. That's what actually happened to you when you were converted, when you were born again. Amen.

Amen.

That word past into life is used of a person migrating from one country to another. And it's in the perfect tense, which means it happens in the past with results continuing on into the future. So in other words, John is saying you've passed from darkness into light, from death to life and once you've passed into the kingdom of God, something happened to you in the past that has an effect on you all the way into the future. So once you've come out of darkness into God's life, you are a child of God forever and ever and ever. But you will be hated, you will be persecuted and possibly even murdered by the children of the devil.

I remember again when I was a brand new Christian and I got saved. I was 19. I had long hair and a beard and I was hippied out and I went back, I thought, well Christians go to church. So here I go. I'm going to go to church. I went back to the denominational church I grew up in. The youngest person in the congregation was 75. Oregon hymn, suits, ties, and in walks this 19-year-old hippie freak. They freaked out. They go, "Wow, a hippie. We got a hippie in our church." It didn't take long for them to know that I was born again. I love Jesus.

Matter of fact, I actually look like Jesus. But it was such a mindblower to me to think about here I am, none of these people in the world could I even relate to. Would I even talk to. Would I ever want to be around. And now I love being with them. They weren't anything like me other than the fact that they were my brothers and sisters in Christ. I love them. They loved me. And they were sweet fellowship in the family of God and they had their token hippie in their church.

They were so proud of me. They took my picture and hung it in the foyer. I'm kidding. But I'll

never forget just the sense of, you know what, I think I really I'm saved, because I actually like these people. And they actually like me. And we have sweet fellowship. Sometimes I meet people that are looking for the cool church. My age group. They look like me. They drive a car like me. They like what I like. That's the cool hip church. That doesn't make any sense. When my prayers for revival Christian fellowship is every age, every social strata, every color, every background that we are brothers and sisters in Christ and that we love one another. Amen.

Amen.

And that the older people, I won't specify what is on older people. Love the younger people. And the younger people love the older people. And the middle people they put up with both of us. And we learn to love each other and get along with each other because we are the family of God. We're God's children. And if Christians can't love each other, who can love each other? One of the marks of the early church was the unbelieving world used to look at them and go my, how they love one another. James Boy says, "If Christians really do love one another, then they will not spend so much time criticizing one another as often as the case. They will not abandon the assembling of themselves together while substituting some private religion. They will not neglect one another's needs, instead they will find themselves uniting together in spiritual fellowship in which the Lord is worshiped and they themselves are mutually encouraged in the Christian life." Amen.

We are the family of God and we should love one another. Then notice verse 15. In verse 15, he says, "Not only do we know that we pass from death into life that's proof that we are the children of God, that we love the brethren, but if we hate," verse 15, "Your brother, you are a murderer." Now Jesus said in Matthew five, verse 21 and 22, "You've heard it said, thou shall not kill or murder. But I say unto you that if you have hatred or anger in your heart, you have already murdered your brother." So God sees hatred as the moral equivalent to murder. So it starts with murder, but the cause is hatred.

So if you are here today child of God, and you find yourself hating someone, God sees your heart. God knows your heart. And if you are really God's child, you cannot harbor or allow hatred in your heart toward someone else. Maybe you need to get saved. Now I want to clarify that in verse 15 he's not saying that a murderer cannot be saved. That a murderer cannot go to heaven. Paul the Apostle was a murderer. David was a murderer. And yet he was saved and went to heaven. I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse from every and all sin. There's no sin too great, but with God's grace is greater still.

But once you have been saved, once you have been born into God's family, the hatred goes away and there's no murder in your heart any longer. And that's not going to be the tenor or the practice of your life. Let me give you my third lesson or point about love from this text. And that is thirdly that love has its supreme pattern in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Love has its supreme pattern in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Follow with me verse 16. This is how we know what love is. Now my King James Bible, it is, "Hereby perceive we the love of God." And the little phrase there of God is italicized in my Bible. So you should draw a little line

through that because it's not in the Greek, it's put there by the translators to create a flow of thought.

And what John is basically saying, maybe have a modern translation that says, "This is how we know what love is." And I like that. He's actually saying get ready. This is a definition of love. This is a concrete objective example of what love is. You go out into the world and you ask them to define love. They haven't a clue. What is love? Love is a feeling. Love is when your heart starts to beat and you get sweaty and you want to throw up. You've heard those stupid definitions. I feel like slapping people. I can eat a burrito and get that effect on me. What's that got to do with love? Love is when the birds sing and the bees are buzzing and the day is nice and there's a cool breeze coming in your window. That's love. Stupid.

This is how we know what love is. You know what love is? Love is the cross of Jesus Christ. Notice verse 16. This is how we know what love is. That he laid down his life for us. Because he, that is Jesus laid down his life for us. So we should ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. It's that simple. The cross of Jesus Christ forever is the prime example of what love is. So three marks of love, it should be sacrificial. It should be sacrificial. He laid down his life. That means that when Jesus died on the cross, he died voluntarily. He said, "No man takes my life from me. I lay it down on myself. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it up again." The death of Christ was voluntary.

Guess what beloved children of God, you should voluntarily sacrifice your life for others. Notice for whom he laid down his life from this text, for us. The death of Jesus Christ was not only voluntary, it was vicarious. He took your place. He died in my stead. He died for me. No greater love has any man than this, than a man laid down his life for his friends. And Jesus laid down his life for his enemies. On our part, we were enemies of God, and yet Jesus came from heaven and he willingly, voluntarily laid down his life upon the cross and suffered and died for us. This is why in Philippians chapter two, Paul says, "Let the same attitude." English Bible uses the word mind, but it means your attitude. "Let the same mind or attitude that was found in Jesus Christ be found in you."

Who though being in the very essence, former essence God, thought equality with God, not something to hold onto, but he emptied himself. He divested himself of the outward display of his glory and of his majesty, and he came all the way down from heaven down to earth and he took on him the form of a servant that speaks of his incarnation and his humanity. And he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Paul, in that Philippians two passage is telling us, if Jesus would leave heaven and come down to earth and die on the cross for us, how can we not willingly, voluntarily sacrifice our lives for others? That's the Christian life. The Christian life puts self to the side and others first.

This is a great point to apply to marriage too by the way. In marriage we put ourself to the side and we put the other person first. It's a great principle of life. We put ourself to the side and we put others first. Why would Jesus, second person of the Godhead, fellowship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit from all eternity, all the majesty, glory and splendor of heaven.

Why would Jesus leave heaven to come down to earth, to take on a body of limitation and humiliation, weakness, weariness, thirst, hunger. Jesus wept tears and then he would be rejected by men. He would be spat upon and crucified, mocked and ridiculed. Why would he leave heaven to come down to do that? You want the answers? For you.

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was a man used so wonderfully by God and they had a great convention one time of all the Salvation Army workers. They were in a great big auditorium and William Booth was unable to attend. He was off in a distant land. And he was supposed to be there to address the group so he sent a wire to them. Someone got the message and they came up to the front of the auditorium and they were going to read his message to the entire Salvation Army team. You know what the message was? One word, the word others.

Everyone's waiting to hear what William Booth would say. They read the words, others. That's all it said. He was reminding these people, these Christian workers, others, others. Sacrifice yourself for others. What is the world saying? You. What you like? What you want to do? What's good for you? What you want? What feels good? Do it for yourself. Love yourself. Live for yourself. Find yourself. God's kingdom is not the same as man's kingdom. Cain is a prototype of hatred and murder. Christ is the prototype of love and sacrifice. Are you a child of Jesus Christ or are you a child of Cain? There's only two families. You're either a child of God or you're a child of the devil. It's selfishness, hate and greed and jealousy and murder or it's self-sacrifice, love and commitment.

Second mark of love, verse 17, should be simple. Should be practical or simple. If you have this world's goods, if you have food, you have clothes, you have a house, you have automobile, you have money. If you have the world's goods and you see your brother, your Christian brother, sister, they have a need, and you shut your heart up of compassion from him or her. The question is at the end of verse 17, "How dwells the love of God in him?" You know what the answer is? It doesn't.

If you have the clothes and the food and the house and the money and the things, and you see a Christian brother or sister, even if it's on the other side of the world, that's from another country, and another ethnicity, different color skin and they are brother in Christ, and you can help them and you can meet their need and you can measure and you shut up your bowels of compassion, your heart of compassion toward them. John says, "How can the love of God be dwelling in you?" And the answer is, it can't. It's not. You're not a Christian. You have to have that empathy and compassion that motivates you to take action.

You ever have someone come up to you and go, "Hey, I just really need \$20." This is just an example by the way. "I really need \$20." But I have had this happen. I need \$20. Just pray the Lord provides. And I'll put my hand and Lord just pray for my brother right now. I just pray that you'll provide that \$20 he needs. And while I'm praying, the Lord's telling me, it's in your wallet. Rebuke you devil. Lord I just pray that you'll [inaudible 00:42:52]... I mean, I have to like, I got to stop praying and go here. I'm going to answer your prayer right now for you. Here's \$20.

Because the Holy Spirit just like, how can you pray when you have the money to meet the need? And you watch everyone's going to hit each other up after church. "Hey, I need \$20. Hey bro, I need \$20." Everybody, hey, go to Revival Christian Church Fellowship. They giving \$20 bills out there. That's a Christian church. They give away money there.

I'm hungry. Lord, will you pray for me the Lord provides food for our family. You got a refrigerator full of food. And you don't invite them over for meals? You don't take them out to dinner? I just pray that the Lord will help me to... I got a job but I need to get to work tomorrow. You're off tomorrow, you got a car. Loan him a car. Give him a car. You could meet the need. Again, the early Christians when the world looked and they go, "Wow, look at how they love each other." No man considered anything his own, but he gave to meet the needs of the group.

Now we're not to have a forced communism. The Bible doesn't teach forced communism. But it does teach the love of God shed abroad in our heart, should move us. That when we see somebody in need, we will simply meet that need. How do you say to your brother, James says in his epistle, "Be warned, be filled, be clothed when you don't meet the need of your brother." And then thirdly and lastly, verse 18, "It should be sincere." So the pattern of our love is sacrificial, simple and sincere. And I love this closing text verse 18, "My little children," John's enduring term for the family of God, "Let us not love in word neither in tongue, but indeed and in truth." That hurts. John, did you have to say that?

It's so easy to talk about love, to preach about love, to sing about love, to write poems about love, but what isn't easy is to actually love. Jesus said, "If I your Lord and master have washed your feet, you ought to also wash one another's feet." If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you are to be marked by his sincere love, not just saying it with words. Anybody can say the words, but we need to show it in our actions. Griffith Thomas says, "Thus, love is seen to be the man word evidence of our being children of God. Not what we think, however accurately, not what we feel, however strongly, not what we say, however eloquently, but what we do in genuine, practical, self-sacrificing activity. It is the soul, proof and test that we are the children of God." Amen.

Are you a child of God? Are you a child of the devil? Do you have love and self-sacrificing characterize your life or you need to have jealousy, hatred, and murder? Whose child are you? How's your love life today? Children of the world are marked by hatred and jealousy and envy and murder. Children of God are marked by love and self-sacrifice, not emulated by Cain, but emulated by Christ. Whose child are you today? Let's pray.