

1 John 3:11 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[INDEX FOR ALL VERSES ON 1 JOHN](#)

[1 John 3:1](#)
[1 John 3:2](#)
[1 John 3:3](#)
[1 John 3:4](#)
[1 John 3:5](#)
[1 John 3:6](#)
[1 John 3:7](#)
[1 John 3:8](#)
[1 John 3:9](#)
[1 John 3:10](#)
[1 John 3:11](#)
[1 John 3:12](#)
[1 John 3:13](#)
[1 John 3:14](#)
[1 John 3:15](#)
[1 John 3:16](#)
[1 John 3:17](#)
[1 John 3:18](#)
[1 John 3:19](#)
[1 John 3:20](#)
[1 John 3:21](#)
[1 John 3:22](#)
[1 John 3:23](#)
[1 John 3:24](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN

Click chart to enlarge

Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - [Charles Swindoll](#)

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 3

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who?

What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+ "Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading. (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

"Asking questions is the key to understanding."

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...

--	--

1 John 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another

Greek - Hoti aute estin (3PAI) e aggelia en ekousate (2PAAI) ap arche hina agapomen (1PPAS) allelous

KJV 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

BGT 1 John 3:11 π α τ η σ τ ν γ γ ε λ α ν κ ο σ α τ ε π ρ χ ς, ν α γ α π μ ε ν λ λ λ ο υ ς,

NET 1 John 3:11 For this is the gospel message that you have heard from the beginning: that we should love one another,

CSB 1 John 3:11 For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another,

ESV 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

NIV 1 John 3:11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

NLT 1 John 3:11 This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

NRS 1 John 3:11 For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

NJB 1 John 3:11 This is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we must love one another,

NAB 1 John 3:11 For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another,

YLT 1 John 3:11 because this is the message that ye did hear from the beginning, that we may love one another,

MIT 1 John 3:11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We must love one another.

GWN 1 John 3:11 The message that you have heard from the beginning is to love each other.

BBE 1 John 3:11 Because this is the word which was given to you from the first, that we are to have love for one another;

RSV 1 John 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

NKJ 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

ASV 1 John 3:11 For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another:

DBY 1 John 3:11 For this is the message which ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another:

NIRV 1 John 3:11 From the beginning we have heard that we should love one another.

RWB 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

WEB 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Wuest - Because this is the message which you heard from the beginning, to the effect that we should habitually be loving one another with a divine love. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

- **This** - 1Jn 1:5, 2:7,8
- **Message** - 1Ti 1:5
- **We should** - 1Jn 4:7,21 John 13:34-35 15:12 Ga 6:2 Eph 5:2 1Th 4:9 1Pe 1:22 3:8 1Pe 4:8 2Jn 1:5
- 1 John 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

John 13:34-35+ "A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love for one another**."

John 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you **love one another**, just as I have loved you.

John 15:17 "This I command you, that you **love one another**.

Romans 12:10 **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love**; give preference to one another in honor;

Romans 13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to **love one another**; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in **love for one another**, and for all men, just as we also do for you;

1 Thessalonians 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to **love one another**;

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, **ferently love one another from the heart**,

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, **keep fervent in your love for one another**, because love covers a multitude of sins.

1 John 3:23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **love one another**, just as He commanded us.

1 John 4:7 Beloved, **let us love one another**, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to **love one another**.

1 John 4:12 No one has beheld God at any time; if we **love one another**, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

BROTHERLY LOVE: A MARK OF THE CHILD OF GOD

Verse 11 flows naturally out of verse 10. The child of God, having been born of God, does what is right, which includes loving his brother. (Akin)

B F Westcott sums up 1John 3:10-18 - "Life reveals the children of God!" And I would add specifically "Life in the family (love of the brethren)!"

David Allen - John speaks of four different levels of relationships in which we can choose to live: murder (1Jn 3:11, 12), hatred (1Jn 3:13-15), indifference (1Jn 3:16, 17), and Christian love in action (1Jn 3:18). Being precedes doing, but all Christian doing must be based on being, that is, on who we are in Christ. Our practice proclaims who and what we are. (SEE [1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family](#))

William Barclay adds "We can tell what a tree is by its fruits, and similarly we can tell what a man or woman is by that person's conduct. John lays it down that anyone who does not do what is right is by that fact shown not to be of God." ([Daily Study Bible](#))

Harris notes that "This section marks the beginning of the second major part of First John (1John 3:11-5:12)." ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

The mark of the Christian is love for one another.

The standard for that love is the pattern of Christ's love for us.

-- Allen Ross

John Stott refers to 1Jn 3:11-18 as "an elaboration of the social test... namely that to love is the new command (which is yet old) and belongs to the new age in which **the true Light is already shining** (1Jn 2:8-note). As he now fills in his preliminary sketch, he uses no colours but black and white. He continues the stark contrast he has already pointed in 1Jn 3:10-note between the children of God and the children of the devil, and writes of hatred and love, life and death, murder and self-sacrifice." (BORROW [The Letters of John page 143](#))

Hawley - Our nature has consequences; eventually we act the way we really are. To love the brothers and sisters in the believing community demonstrates that we belong to God; to reject the brothers and sisters demonstrates that we don't really belong to God.

It is not enough to believe rightly.

We must behave rightly

-- David Allen

For ([hoti](#) - [see note](#)) **this is the message** ([aggelia](#)) **which you have heard** ([akouo](#)) **from the beginning** ([arche](#)), **that** ([hina](#) - introduces purpose or result) **we should love** ([agapao](#) - present tense) **one another** ([allelon](#)) - For ([hoti](#)) serves here as a marker of an explanatory clause, "drawing an inference based upon all that has preceded." Whenever you encounter a conjunction used as a term of explanation, pause and ask "What is the writer explaining?" As in this case, it will usually force you to examine the context. In the context the **message** is a reference to the original, apostolic Gospel, the good "**message**" of Him Who loved us (Jn 3:16) and which births children who exhibit a Spirit-enabled, supernatural love for their brothers and sisters in Christ. From the outset of their Christian life, John's readers had been taught the importance of **love for one another**. It was not something they had never heard before. John was not telling them some new truth or something he had "invented." As John Calvin said "John reminds us that he

was teaching nothing but what had been heard by the faithful concerning love from the beginning and had become old through long usage."

The absence of love in the life of a child of God is inconsistent with the message of love that has been proclaimed to them.

-- Daniel Akin

Vine says **for this is the message** is "more literally, "Because the message is this," cp. 1 Jn 1:5. The message there spoke of the nature of God and its bearing on the Christian life. The message here instructs us as to our duty one to another. The readers heard it from the beginning, since it was among the first things inculcated in their hearts as believers, and not only so but it had been constantly repeated. Jerome informs us that toward the close of the apostle's life, after he had become too infirm to preach, he still continued constantly to give the exhortation, "Little children, love one another." He tells us how he remarked. "It is the Lord's command, and if this is done, it is enough." What is here stated, then, is that the manifestation of the character of Christ in the believer is the outcome of receiving the word of God. The gospel not only saves men but unites them to Christ and this produces in them that love which is essential in His character, was manifested by Him, embraces all the other qualities of the fruit of the spirit, and fulfills the law of God. ([Collected Writings](#))

John Piper explains that "The **for** at the beginning of this verse shows that in John's mind 1Jn 3:11 is the ground or the reason for 1Jn 3:10, or more specifically the reason for why he can shift from righteousness in general as a test of divine sonship to the specific test of love for the brethren. The reason he can make that shift is that the command to love one another was what his readers had heard from the beginning. The moral imperative for Christians to love one another was at the heart of the apostolic Gospel. And it still is. From the very beginning, that is, from the very first time they heard the Gospel, John's readers knew beyond a shadow of a doubt what God would expect and would empower them to do: **love one another**... And any gospel you believe, any gospel you proclaim that does not include both doctrine and ethics is only half a gospel, tragically incomplete, radically distorted, hopelessly deficient. Both doctrine and ethics are at the heart of the gospel because they are so inextricably linked. The character of God, who as light is wholly righteous, true, and loving, demands and empowers moral responses on the part of his children. Supremely these moral responses are to be ones of love. Our love for one another is demanded by the character of God, but it is also empowered by the brightness of the God who is light and love, with whom there is no small print. Only when we see and believe and cherish the brightness of God, will we be free to entrust ourselves and our futures into his hands. And then and only then will we be free to forget about ourselves in order to genuinely love someone else. John speaks of the evidence of love in 1 Jn 3:14–15, and sandwiching those verses on either side comes John's teaching about the essence of love. This teaching comes to us in the form of two contrasting pictures, a negative and a positive example, if you will. 1 Jn 3:12–13 show us the negative example, Cain, who in his hatred and ultimate murder of his brother Abel is the prototype of the world. His example, John says, is not at all to be followed by Christians. The positive example comes in 1Jn 3:16–18. That is Jesus Christ, whose example of self-sacrificial love is to be imitated and followed by us as his disciples." ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

Message (31)(**aggelia** related to **aggelos** = messenger; our English "Angel") means tidings, news, message, report. 1Jn 3:11 and 1Jn 1:5 are the only NT uses of **aggelia**. Used in the Septuagint 11x - 1Sa 4:19; 2Sa 4:4; 2Ki 19:7; Pr 12:25; 25:25; 26:16; Isa 28:9; 37:7; Ezek 7:26; 21:7; Nah 3:19. **Aggelia** os related to a number of important NT words including **aggello** - to announce, **paraggello** = command; **kataggello** - to proclaim, **euaggelion** = gospel, etc.

1 John 1:5 And this is the **message** (**aggelia**) we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

NET Note - The word **aggelia** occurs only twice in the NT, 1Jn 1:5 and in 1 John 3:11. It is a cognate of **epaggelia** which occurs much more frequently (some 52 times in the NT) including 1Jn 2:25. **Aggelia** is closely equivalent to **euaggelion**: (1) it refers to the proclamation of the eyewitness testimony about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as proclaimed by the author and the rest of the apostolic witnesses (prologue, esp. 1Jn 1:3–4), and (2) it relates to the salvation of the hearers/readers, since the purpose of this proclamation is to bring them into fellowship with God and with the apostolic witnesses (1Jn 1:3). Because of this the adjective "gospel" is included in the English translation (The NET Bible = "the gospel message").

Marvin Vincent on **message** - "announcement," as of something good; not a mere command, as the law. The Gospel message of Him who loved us, announced by His servants, is, that we love the brethren; not here all mankind, but those who are our brethren in Christ, children of the same family of God, of whom we have been born anew.

Have heard (Same phrase in 1Jn 1:1, 1:5, 2:7, 3:11, 4:3) - What had they heard? This most likely refers to John 15:12 where Jesus said "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you." John 15:12 "is itself a restatement of the "new commandment" of John 13:34." ([Harris](#))

*His readers will be safe if they
hold fast to the message which they heard*

John Stott explains that this original Gospel message "was also public knowledge in contrast to the private and secret enlightenment which the false teachers claimed. His readers will be safe if they hold fast to the message which they **heard**, and that publicly and openly, from the **beginning**... In both doctrine and ethics we must go right back to the **beginning** and enquire what the apostles originally taught and their first converts both had (1Jn 2:7, eichete, aorist) and **heard** (1Jn 2:24 and 1Jn 3:11, ēkousate, another aorist). An essential part of that message was that we should **love one another** (cf. 1Jn 3:23; 4:7; 11–12; 2 John 1:5; John 13:34; 15:12, 17)." (BORROW [The Letters of John page 142](#))

From the beginning ([arche](#)) - Same phrase - 1Jn 1:1, 2:7, 2:13, 2:14, 2:24, 3:8, 3:11. Here John is referring to "the beginning of Jesus' self-revelation to his disciples in the course of his earthly life and ministry." ([Harris](#)) Earlier John had said

Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which **you have had from the beginning** ([arche](#)) ; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. (1John 2:7)

Robertson on (the message) **from the beginning** - They had the message of love for the brotherhood from the beginning of the Gospel and it goes back to the time of Cain and Abel (1Jn 3:12).

Vine - The readers heard it **from the beginning**, since it was among the first things inculcated in their hearts as believers, and not only so but it had been constantly repeated. Jerome informs us that toward the close of the apostle's life, after he had become too infirm to preach, he still continued constantly to give the exhortation, "Little children, love one another." He tells us how he remarked. "It is the Lord's command, and if this is done, it is enough." ([Collected Writings](#))

Beginning ([746](#))([arche](#)) refers to the commencement of something as an action, process, or state of being.
Arché refers to what is first or has primacy (the state of being first).

Love one another - This is the first of six uses by John of this phrase in his epistles - 1Jn 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 1:5. The other uses are found in John 13:34; 15:12, 17; Ro 13:8; 1Th 4:9; 1Pe 1:22. In reminding them of this message to love one another, John himself was remembering the command of Jesus in John 13:34 - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also **love one another**."

John Piper - The wording of 1 Jn 3:11 is striking. It is a very close parallel (almost word for word) with 1 John 1:5. There the message which John's readers had heard was a doctrinal one, the theological foundation for their faith that rests in the character of God. "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5). Now in our verse today (1 Jn 3:11) the message they had heard from the beginning was equally foundational, but now not in the realm of doctrine, but of ethics. "For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." The doctrinal foundation that God is light and the moral, ethical foundation of love for one another are both at the heart of the apostolic gospel. The gospel is incomplete unless it includes both doctrine and ethics. ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

Love ([25](#))([agapao](#)) "speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved." (Wuest - [Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

David Guzik - The basic Christian message has not changed. Perhaps some have thought that because Christians talk about a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ" that it is only us and Jesus who matter. But how we treat others - how we love one another - really matters before God.

John Piper: "The wording of 1Jn 3:11 is striking. It is a very close parallel (almost word for word) with 1 John 1:5. There the message which John's readers had heard was a doctrinal one, the theological foundation for their faith that rests in the character of God 'This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all' (1Jn 1:5). Now in our verse today (1Jn 3:11) the message they had heard from the beginning was equally foundational, but now not in the realm of doctrine, but of ethics. 'For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.' The doctrinal foundation that God is light and the moral, ethical foundation of love for one another are both at the heart of the apostolic gospel. The gospel is incomplete unless it includes both doctrine and ethics. Doctrine is of the essence of the gospel--doctrine about the character of God; about human sin; about the mediator, Jesus Christ, who is the God-man; about his life, death and resurrection to forgive the sins of his people and give them eternal life; about the need for personal response of faith to appropriate the work of Christ into one's own life. But it is equally true that the essence of the gospel includes the moral imperatives of repentance and of a new life of love lived under the Lordship of Christ and empowered by his Spirit. And any gospel you believe, any gospel you proclaim that does not include both doctrine and ethics is only half a gospel tragically incomplete, radically distorted, hopelessly deficient.

Both doctrine and ethics are at the heart of the gospel because they are so inextricably linked. The character of God, who as light is wholly righteous, true and loving demands and empowers moral responses on the part of his children. Supremely these moral responses are to be ones of love. Our love for one another is demanded by the character of God but it is also empowered by the brightness of the God who is light and love, with whom there is no small print. Only when we see and believe and cherish the brightness of God will we be free to entrust ourselves and our futures into his hands. And then and only then will we be free to forget about ourselves in order to genuinely love someone else. Biblically speaking doctrine and ethics always go together. And in both cases, both in doctrine and in ethics, our need is not for something new. That's what the false teachers in John's day were trumpeting. They were the ones with the new revelations. They were the ones with the latest ideas. They were the ones who were modern, progressive "with-it". They were infatuated with newness. But according to John that isn't what we need at all. What we need, which is what his readers needed, is to go back to what we have heard from the beginning. John's command in 1Jn 2:24 applies to us in terms of ethics as well as doctrine "Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you." ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

THOUGHT - Demonstrating love is our obligation—regardless of feelings, irrespective of circumstances, and despite how “unlovable” a person might be. Consider the people God has placed in your life. Is your love for them characterized by cautious restraint, or do you apply your love at full strength? (See [1, 2, & 3 John - Page 71](#))

SHARE GOD'S LOVE - Russell Spray

Text: “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:11).

I. Be Reconciled.

“First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt. 5:24).

- A. Many are unable to share God's love because they hold resentments and fail to forgive others.
- B. Reconciliation with others, with restitution when necessary, brings peace with God. Then we are able to share God's love through prayer, compassion, and effort.

II. Be Responsive.

“Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).

- A. Some people are concerned with selfish interests only. They refuse to share with the less fortunate.
- B. We must help others unselfishly. As we respond to their needs, we are sharing God's love with them (1 Thess. 5:14).

III. Be Radiant.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

- A. Some Christians dwell on the gloomy side of life. Because of their lack of joy, their testimony is ineffective.
- B. We share God's love when we radiate His joy. The joy of the Lord is not only attractive; it also brings victory. (1 Cor. 15:57).

IV. Be Reliable.

“Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith ...” (Col. 2:7).

- A. Many Christians are undependable. Sometimes up and sometimes down, they lack stability.
- B. We must be trustworthy. We must be ready to go, to witness, to pray, to help, and to share God's love effectively (1 Cor. 15:58).

Allen Ross - John 15:12 “Love one another”

The care and concern for one another in the body of Christ is one of those areas of Christianity that is readily acknowledged but seldom pursued. Our Lord Jesus laid down the command for His followers to love one another: “My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12,13).

That the kind of love Jesus had in mind is sacrificial love, a love that seeks to help others at one's own expense, is absolutely clear from the comparison He made. His love for us cost Him His life--He willingly laid it down for us. That is the standard of love that is to be followed. The command to love one another is not a command simply to make friends with everyone, not even to like everyone (some of us are not always likeable), and certainly not merely to treat them with respect or kindness. It is a call for Christian action. This kind of love is an act of the will in which the one who loves seeks the best interests of other people even though it may be inconvenient to do so, or costly, or time consuming. We probably will not be called on to lay down our lives for others, but that is the fullest expression of this kind of love.

It begins with an attitude of love for other Christians--we must look around in the congregation and realize that these are people that

Christ so loved that He died for them so that they might be with Him in glory. It finds expression in action: we must resolve to go out of our way to encourage and help people in whatever way we can. It should be a regular quest to find out who needs encouragement, assistance, or care. We cannot assume that because everyone is sitting neatly in their pew on Sunday that everything is okay and our job is done. If we make this a matter of prayer, then God will bring our way opportunities to demonstrate that we love one another.

One thing is very clear in the Bible, and that is what this love is not. John says, "We should love one another, no like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother" (1 John 3:11,12). John uses the standard of loving one another as evidence of true faith. Such love does not destroy a brother. Unfortunately, too much history of the Christian faith is spotted with people trying to destroy one another, one way or another. That is of the evil one.

The mark of the Christian is love for one another. The standard for that love is the pattern of Christ's love for us. The motivation for loving one another comes from our love for Christ, for if we love Him we will keep His commandments--and He commanded us to love one another.