

1 John 3:16 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
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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

1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren:

Greek: en touto egnokamen (1PRAI) ten agapen hoti ekeinos huper hemon ten psuchen autou etheken (3SAAI) kai hemeis opheilomen (1PPAI) huper ton adelphon tas psuchas theinai (AAN).

NET - We have come to know love by this: that Jesus laid down his life for us; thus we ought to lay down our

lives for our fellow Christians.

Wuest - In this we have come to know by experience the aforementioned love, because that One on behalf of us laid down His soul. And, as for us, we have a moral obligation on behalf of our brethren to lay down our souls.

- **Know** - 1Jn 4:9,10 Mt 20:28 John 3:16 10:15 15:13 Ac 20:28 Ro 5:8 Eph 5:2,25 Titus 2:13 1Pe 1:18 2:24 3:18 Rev 1:5 5:9
- **and we:** 1Jn 2:6 4:11 John 13:34 15:12,13 Ro 16:4 Php 2:17,30
- [1 John 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

OUR EXAMPLE OF LOVE: THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

By this (hereby) (en touto) - This phrase is first in the Greek and literally means "in this" and is used a number of times by John (Jn 13:35, 15:8, 16:30, 1Jn 2:5, 3:24, 4:13, 5:2, 3:16, 3:19, 4:2) When you encounter "**by this**" pause and ask "**By what?**" In this passage John is pointing to what follows, although some feel he is also pointing back to the negative example of Cain to highlight the positive example of Christ. If Cain is the prototype of hate, Christ is the perfect example of love.

"Christ is the archetype of self-sacrificing love, as Cain is of brother-sacrificing hate! Love and hate are known by their works." (Plummer)

William Barclay - 'If you want to see what this love is, look at Jesus Christ. In his death for us on the cross, it is fully displayed.' In other words, the Christian life is the imitation of Christ. 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 2:5-**note**). 'Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps' (1Peter 2:21-**note**). No one can look at Christ and then claim not to know what the Christian life is. ([1 John 3 Commentary - Daily Study Bible](#))

Warren Wiersbe makes a great point - Every Christian knows John 3:16, but how many of us pay much attention to 1 John 3:16? It is wonderful to experience the blessing of John 3:16; but it is even more wonderful to share that experience by obeying 1 John 3:16: Christ laid down life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Christian love involves sacrifice and service. Christ did not simply talk about His love; He died to prove it (Rom. 5:6-10). ([Wiersbe Bible Commentary](#))

We know ([1097](#))(**ginosko**) often means to know by experience (some think **ginosko** and **eido** are used interchangeably by John but I think there are definite shades of difference depending on the context). **Ginosko** is in the **perfect tense** which means that we came to **know** at a point in time and that we still **know**, to acquire and possess this knowledge. It speaks of permanence of this knowledge. "We have learnt and now hold the lesson forever." (Westcott) And what was it they had experienced? They had experienced the love of God in Christ laying down His life that they might become recipients of His payment of the price of redemption (from slavery to sin and Satan) and forgiveness of their sins. And such a permanent knowledge should serve to motivate believers to do as their Savior did, to love as He loved, laying down their lives as He laid down His. **Have you prayerfully (asking the Spirit to open the eyes of your heart) meditated recently on what Jesus did for you when He laid down His life for you?** What might a revived experiential knowledge of His sacrifice do for your spiritual life, particularly in the area of sacrificial love!

Steven Cole - If you're running short on love, stop and meditate on what Jesus did for you. If the servant who had been forgiven the huge debt had stopped to think about it, he would have forgiven his fellow servant the lesser debt (Mt. 18:23-35). Or, as John states (1Jn 4:11), "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." ([1 John 3:11-18 Hatred or Love?](#))

Hiebert adds this comment on the **perfect tense** of **ginosko** - The perfect-tense verb "we perceive" (egnōkamen) indicates a knowledge that has been gained through diligent contemplation of the significance of that historical event. Having come to know this love through our past encounter with it, we now know the true nature of this love. ([1 John 3:13-24 Online](#)) ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#))

In 1Jn 2:3-**note** John used **ginosko** in **perfect tense** - "And by this we know (ginosko - present tense) that we have come to know (ginosko - perfect tense) Him, if we keep (**present tense** - as the general direction of our life - in short not lawless but law abiding) His commandments." If we claim to know Jesus and do not keep His commandments, we are lying (to ourselves and everyone around us and will be exposed as a fraud and hypocrite on the day of judgment!).

Love ([26](#))(**agape**) is the selfless, supernatural love that God is and God gives us via His indwelling Spirit (Ro 5:5-**note**, Gal 5:22-**note**). In context Christ's **love** is clearly demonstrated by the costliness of His sacrifice. His love was costly and so should our love be for the brethren. This Christ-like love is not love that is felt as much as it is a love that is demonstrated, the ultimate demonstration being by what He did = **He laid down His life for us!** Love is in a sense saying "No" to our life that others may live. "The kind of love John is talking about is not native to the human heart." (Hiebert)

Love is literally "the love" which David Smith terms "the thing called love. The love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord is the perfect type. Till the world saw that, it never knew what love is!" ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Steven Cole makes an interesting statement - There is hardly a passage in the New Testament that speaks of God's love that does not also speak of the cross. ([1 John 3:11-18 Hatred or Love?](#))

Boice: "What is it that gives the love of God as seen at the cross its special character? Primarily it is the element of self-sacrifice on behalf of those who are totally undeserving and even undesirous of the sacrifice." ([The Epistles of John Expositional Commentary](#))

What is agape love? "Agape love a love that denies self for the benefit of the object loved. **Agape** describes the love of the Spirit-filled husband, purified and made heavenly in character. **Agape** is the love which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in the heart of the yielded believer (Ro 5:5-note) The saint is to order his behavior or manner of life within the sphere of this divine, supernatural (agape) love produced in his heart by the Holy Spirit. When this love becomes the deciding factor in his choices and the motivating power in his actions, he will be walking in love. He will be exemplifying in his life the self-sacrificial love shown at Calvary and the Christian graces mentioned in 1Co 13:4-7 - see notes 1Co 13:4; 13:5 ; 13:6 , 13:7 . **(It is) a love that is willing to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of that brother, a love that causes one to be long suffering toward him, a love that makes one treat him kindly, a love that so causes one to rejoice in the welfare of another that there is no room for envy in the heart, a love that is not jealous, a love that keeps one from boasting of one's self, a love that keeps one from bearing one's self in a lofty manner, a love that keeps one from acting unbecomingly, a love that keeps one from seeking one's own rights, a love that keeps one from becoming angry, a love that does not impute evil, a love that does not rejoice in iniquity but in the truth, a love that bears up against all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. That is the kind of love which God says one Christian should have for another.**" (Agape love) 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. (In Jn 3:16) God's love for a sinful and lost race springs from His heart in response to the high value He places upon each human soul. Every sinner is exceedingly precious in His sight... each sinner is most precious to God, first, because he bears the image of his Creator even though that image be marred by sin, and second, because through redemption, that sinner can be conformed into the very image of God's dear Son. This preciousness of each member of the human race to the heart of God is the constituent element of the love that gave His Son to die on the Cross. The degree of the preciousness is measured by the infinite sacrifice which God made. The love in Jn 3:16 therefore is a love whose essence is that of self-sacrifice for the benefit of the one loved, this love based upon an evaluation of the preciousness of the one loved, this love based upon an evaluation of the preciousness of the one loved. (Compiled from Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans)

David Guzik adds that agape "described a love that loves without changing. It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment. It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing. It is love that loves even when it is rejected. Agape love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the love given - it gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive... It isn't the death of Jesus in itself that is the ultimate demonstration of love; it is the death of Jesus together with what it does for us that shows the epitome of love (See Denney's description below). ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

James Denney - If I were sitting on the end of the pier on a summer day enjoying the sunshine and the air, and some one came along and jumped into the water and got drowned "to prove his love for me", I should find it quite unintelligible. I might be much in need of love, but an act in no rational relation to any of my necessities could not prove it. But if I had fallen over the pier and were drowning, and some one sprang into the water, and at the cost of making my peril, or what but for him would be my fate, his own, saved me from death, then I should say, "Greater love hath no man than this." I should say it intelligibly, because there would be an intelligent relation between the sacrifice which love made and the necessity from which it redeemed. ([Death of Christ - Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#))

Steven Cole - John will state this directly in 1Jn 4:7, but it is implicit in our text. Love in the believer comes from God. In 3:10b, John said that the one who does not love is not of God, implying that the one who loves is of God. In 3:17, he says that if we do not demonstrate practical love for those in need, the love of God does not abide in us. If you lack love for someone, first make sure that you are born of God. Then, ask Him for it. ([1 John 3:11-18 Hatred or Love?](#))

He laid down His life - Clearly refers to the crucifixion of Christ. **Laid down** is **aorist tense, active voice, indicative mood** indicating Jesus accomplished this act deliberately, actively and volitionally (voluntarily - a choice of His will) at a given time in history for the interest of others. His death was not passive like the thousands of sacrificial animals that had been laid on the altars, none having a choice in the matter. No, Jesus "died actively and purposefully" (Kistemaker). The verb (tithemi) is used in the sense of laying aside in the classics, as to lay aside war, shields, etc. Compare Jesus' words in Mt 20:28 (to give His life). We see this

sacrificial love in many NT passages - Gal 1:4, Eph 5:2, 1Pe 2:24, 1Pe 3:18.

David Allen on Christ's voluntary laying down - John essentially says three things about Jesus' death on the cross: it was voluntary, it was vicarious, and it was victorious... Most people consider the first law of life to be self-preservation. Jesus teaches us that the first law of spiritual life is self-sacrifice... As if speaking directly to the Savior himself, Spurgeon said in his sermon on this passage, "Ah, Lord Jesus! I never knew Thy love till I understood the meaning of Thy death." The most astounding thing in all the world is the fact that Jesus was willing, out of love for us, to die in our place as our substitute. There is a famous picture by a great artist of an angel standing by the cross of Christ. With his fingers he is feeling the sharp points of the thorns that had pierced the Savior's brow, and on his face is a great look of wonder and astonishment. The angel cannot understand the marvel of that love. In fact, no one can fully fathom such love. During his only visit to the United States, the eminent Swiss theologian Karl Barth lectured at Union Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. After his formal address he engaged in some informal conversation with the students. One young man asked Barth if he could state the core of what he believed. Barth took a moment to light his pipe, and then, as the smoke drifted away, he replied, "Yes, I think I can summarize my theology in these words: 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'"

1 John 3:16: The Death of Christ for His People - C H Spurgeon

This same idiomatic description (**laid down His life**) was used by Jesus in the Gospel of John:

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd **lays down His life** for the sheep. (Jn 10:11)

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I **lay down My life** that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I **lay it down** on My own initiative. I have authority **to lay it down**, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father. (John 10:17, 18)

"**Greater love** has no one than this, that one **lay down his life** for his **friends** (in context of 1John = brothers). (John 15:13)

John Piper on **Three Reasons Jesus Death Is the Supreme Example of Love** - Now I would like to suggest to you three reasons why Jesus' death on the cross should serve as the supreme example of love for us.

1. It Involved the Greatest Possible Sacrifice - First of all, it involved the greatest possible sacrifice. Christ gave up his very life for us. Love takes so much joy in another person's welfare that it is willing, eager, delighted to sacrifice one's own personal well-being for the good of the other person. Now a person's life is his most precious possession. To rob him of it, which is murder, is the greatest possible sin you could ever commit against him. By the same token, to give one's own life for the sake of another's is the greatest possible expression of love for him. You remember what Jesus said in John 15:13: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." It is a sharp contrast that John paints for us. Cain's hatred issued forth in murder. Jesus' love issued forth in self-sacrifice, even to the point of giving up his very life for us.

2. It Meets Our Deepest Needs - Second, and more importantly, Christ's death on the cross is the supreme example of love in that it meets our needs in a way that nothing else ever could. It is not only the greatest possible sacrifice, it also does the greatest possible good for us. The key words in v. 16 are "he laid down his life for us." You see, self-sacrifice in and of itself is not intrinsically valuable. Self-sacrifice becomes love only to the extent that it is positively related to human need. Only insofar as self-sacrifice works for the good of another does it have any value in the eyes of God. I think that is what Paul was getting at in 1 Corinthians 13:3, "If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned [there's self-sacrifice to be sure] but have not love [that is, the self-sacrifice is not directed to meeting the needs of anyone else], I gain nothing." But Christ's love for us is exceedingly positive. (True love always is.) It moved him to lay down his life for us. Again there is a sharp contrast. In Genesis 4:8 we read, "Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him." In 1 John 3:16 we read, "[Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us." And in those prepositions, the "against" of Genesis 4:8 as compared to the "for" of 1 John 3:16, we find the difference between love and hate, between life and death. The death of Jesus Christ is the supreme example of love because it meets our deepest needs—it brings us peace with God, forgiveness, a clear conscience, hope for the future, power to love in the present, etc., etc. It does the greatest possible good for us.

3. It Had the Greatest Possible Motive - But not only does Jesus' death embody love because it was the greatest possible sacrifice done for the greatest possible good. It was also done for the greatest possible motive. According to John 12:28 Jesus went to the cross in order to glorify the name of his heavenly Father. And the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before him" (Hebrews 12:2). These two inextricably linked goals—the glory of God and our own delight and joy in it—are to be the supreme

motive for any act of love. They were for Jesus, and they are to be for us. ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

Life (5590)(*psuche*) is the the word for soul. Yes, the Cross cost Christ His physical life but there was also a cost to His **soul**, for when at the ninth hour (time of the evening offering) Jesus cried out from the Cross "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mt 27:46, Mk 15:34). Here we see the Triune God speaking of being forsaken by His Father. O the depth of the mystery surrounding the profound cost of Jesus laying down His life for us!

As Cain took his brother's life to benefit self, Christ laid down His life to benefit His enemies (Ro 5:10**note**)!

For us (*ekeinos huper*) - The idea is that He did this "in our place," or "on our behalf", His death as our example. John uses this preposition (*huper*) in John 10:11, 15, John 11:50. He died that we might live and love like He did in His death!

Hiebert on for us - Although the preposition "**for**" (*huper*) may be used to present the message of Christ's substitutionary atonement (cf. John 11:50; 1Cor. 15:3; 2Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13), that does not seem to be the intended message here; rather John is stressing one aspect of Christ's death, His being an example. Since one's own life is an individual's most precious possession, Christ's willingness to lay down that life on behalf of others constituted the greatest possible expression of love (Jn 15:13; Ro 5:6-10). " **'Self-preservation' is the first law of physical life; but 'self-sacrifice' is the first law of spiritual life.**" Such a love is the very opposite of hatred, which is destructive of the welfare of others. ([1 John 3:13-24 Online](#)) ([The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary](#))

OUR PRACTICE OF LOVE: IMITATION OF CHRIST

And (*kai*) - John clearly and quickly connects Christ's example with a call for us to imitate His example.

Hiebert - In 1Jn 2:6 John has already stated the obligation of believers to follow the example of Christ; now he indicates how sweeping that obligation is.

We - This pronoun is emphatic emphasizing that "We on our part..." Christ's self-sacrifice is not just a revelation to be admired, but an example to be imitated (1Pe 2:21-**note**). Notice how John does not say YOU are to do this, but as a master teacher, he places himself on the same level as his readers stating **WE** ought to lay down our lives! Good point for all us teachers!

Smalley notes that "The idea of the **'imitation of Christ'**, which this verse presents, appears with some frequency in First John (cf. 1Jn 2:6-**note**; also 1Jn 2:29-**note**; 1Jn 3:2-**note**, 1Jn 3:3-**note**, 1Jn 3:7-**note**; 1Jn 4:11, 17). The concept is also deeply embedded in the theology of the NT generally (cf. 1Cor 11:1; Phil 2:5-8-**note**; 1Th 1:6-**note** "imitators... of the Lord"; 1Ti 6:13-14; Heb 12:2-3-**note**; 1Pet 2:21-**note**)." ([1, 2, 3 John Word Biblical Commentary - Stephen S. Smalley](#))

Paul alluded to believers emulating Christ's example explaining...

For **the love of Christ** (His love for us including that demonstrated at Calvary) controls (**synecho**) us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should **no longer live for themselves**, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." (2Cor 5:14-15-**note**)

Kent Hughes comments - The great compelling motive force in his life since conversion is that of love; not, however, love originating, far less ending, in himself, but the love which originates and ends with God in Christ. His conduct, however it be judged, is dictated by the love of Christ (not so much his love for Christ—though that inevitably is involved—as Christ's love for him, which is prior to and the explanation of his love for Christ, and which is supremely manifested, as is clear from what immediately follows, in Christ's atoning sacrifice of Himself... It is this love (*agape*) and none other, that shuts him in, confines him as between two walls (Ed: A good word picture of **synecho**) to one purpose which may be summed up in the terms of the preceding verse as being **to live selflessly "unto God" and, within the framework of that supreme allegiance, to his fellow-men** ("unto you" - 2Co 5:13-**note**).

Westcott - That which constrains us is not only His example, but the truth which that example reveals.

WE ARE UNDER MORAL OBLIGATION TO LOVE

Piper - There is an "oughtness" to (brotherly love). This is the moral imperative of love that is at the very heart of the gospel. We ought to reflect for others the same kind of love that Jesus had for us. We ought to delight so much in doing them good that we are willing to give up our very lives for them.

We ought (3784)(*opheilo*) means we have an moral obligation or we "owe a debt" (so to speak) to do the same as He did, imitating

Him, following in His steps. We who claim to be Christ's disciples or followers are obligated to love even as our Lord loved, to the point of death (for Him on a Cross, for us death to self - Mk 8:34-35).

This obligation is similar to 1Jn 2:6-note where John said "the one who says he abides in Him **ought** (**opheilo**) himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." **Westcott** comments that "The life which is from God and in God must be manifested after the pattern of the divine life which has been shown upon earth."

It is interesting that John choose **opheilo** and not **dei**, for the former conveys more of a moral obligation and the latter more of a physical necessity. **Hiebert** adds "Instead of saying "must" (**dei**), which would have conveyed the thought of "logical necessity," John uses "ought" (**opheilomen**) which conveys an inner sense of "moral obligation."" ([1 John 3:13-24 Online](#)) ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#))

The **present tense** of **opheilo** signifies that we ought to be laying down our lives daily for our brethren! "Surrendering ourselves for others is a regular Christian obligation, and should be regarded as an ordinary duty rather than a transcendent deed of virtue." (**Smalley**) But just try to accomplish this surrender in your own (natural) strength! You and I simply cannot do it! We need to rely on the enabling power of the Spirit to die daily! Yes, we still have to make the decision (usually moment by moment as opportunities present themselves to "die to self"), but it is God's Spirit in us Who initiates this **desire** in our heart and gives us the **power** to accomplish it (Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note). And don't worry, God will give us plenty of "pop tests" to allow us to practice dying to self and loving others! If you are married, you know full well that what I am saying is all too true!

Kistemaker on **ought to lay down our lives** - When he says **ought**, he imposes a moral obligation: as Jesus extends his love by giving his life, so the Christian **ought** to express his love for the believers by being willing to lay down his life for them. When the honor of God's Name, the advancement of His church, and the need of His people demand that we love our brothers, we ought to show our love at all cost—even to the point of risking and losing our lives. ([Epistles of John- Simon J. Kistemaker](#))

Hiebert on obligation of believers to **lay down** their lives - The **aorist tense**, "to lay down," denotes the supreme act of self-sacrifice to which Christian love, if necessary, should be willing to go, namely, the willingness to surrender our lives "for the brethren."... John is not seeking to stimulate a spirit of martyrdom in his readers, but he is stressing that this is the extent to which Christian love should be willing to go (John 15:12–13). ([1 John 3:13-24 Online](#)) ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#))

John uses **opheilo** again in chapter 4 writing "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also **ought** (**opheilo**) to **love one another**."

In his Third Epistle John describes another way of loving the brethren writing "Therefore **we ought** (**opheilo**) to support such men (traveling teachers), that we may be fellow workers with the truth." (3John 1:8) What a great truth of Jesus' maxim that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), for here we see that those who demonstrate love to the traveling brethren become partners with them in their work of proclaiming the Gospel! And one day they will share in their reward in glory! Amazing love indeed!

John Piper on **we ought**... - There is an "oughtness" to it. This is the moral imperative of love that is at the very heart of the gospel. We ought to reflect for others the same kind of love that Jesus had for us. We ought to delight so much in doing them good that we are willing to give up our very lives for them. But as you know, not many of us will have the opportunity to die for one another. But what we all have constantly are opportunities to demonstrate Christlike love in lesser, more nitty-gritty ways—like sharing our possessions with those in need. ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

While Cain's **selfish** love led him to slay his brother, the believer's **selfless** love compels him to sacrifice for his brother! Christ has given to us, so now we are to give to others.

Guzik - Since we are sent with the same mandate Jesus was sent with, we must demonstrate our love by **laying down our lives for the brethren**. Jesus' words As the Father sent Me, I also send you (John 20:21) seem to be ringing in John's ears. ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

As **Wuest** says regarding the statement **we ought to lay down our lives** - "**Lives** again is **psuche soul**. The ego must be crucified. Self must be denied for the benefit of one's brother. It must be kept in mind that our Lord's death had atoning value, whereas our laying down our lives in glad service to our fellow man does not."

Jesus used **opheilo** in Luke (in a parable on the master-servant relationship) declaring

"too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves (**doulos**); we have done only that which we ought (**opheilo**; KJV = "our duty" ~ we had a debt) to have done.'" (Lk 17:10)

Henry Morris comments "As bondslaves to Christ, **we owe Him many debts**. As Paul says, "I am debtor... to preach the gospel" (Ro 1:14,15-note). No longer "to live after the flesh" is also a debt we owe (Ro 8:13-note). We "ought to bear the infirmities of the weak" (Ro 15:1-note), "to love one another" (1Jn 4:11), "to

be teachers" (Heb 5:12-note), and "to walk as He walked" (1Jn 2:6-note).

Ultimately, to **lay down our lives for the brethren**, is the supreme proof that we love them. John described this in his Gospel (quoted earlier) and Peter had to learn a hard lesson about what it meant (and that it could only be accomplished in the supernatural strength of the Spirit and not the natural strength of a man - and so it was not until Peter received power from on high [Lk 24:49], the power of the Holy Spirit [Acts 1:8], that he was willing to lay down his life for Christ - see Acts 5:29-32, 33, 40-41!)...

Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will **lay down my life** for You. Jesus answered, "Will you **lay down your life** for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times. (Jn 13:37-38)

Greater love has no one than this, that one **lay down his life** for his friends. (Jn 15:13)

For some of John's readers this may have indeed meant laying down their physical lives and it may still be true of many followers of Christ today, especially if they are living in areas known for intense Christian persecution. (You may be unaware of ongoing persecution. If you are click on the various countries marked on [The Voice of the Martyrs Prayer Map](#)). And then pray for your persecuted brothers and sisters, which surely is one form of laying down one's life for the brethren. "Christ died for those who hated Him and the Christian must confront... the world with a love that is ready to die even for the haters." (cp Stephen in Acts 7:54-60)

I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead;
I gave, I gave My life for thee;
What hast thou given for Me?
-- Frances R. Havergal

Stott sums up this section -- Hatred characterizes the world, whose prototype is Cain. It originates in the devil, issues in murder and is evidence of spiritual death. Love characterizes the Church, whose prototype is Christ. It originates in God, issues in self-sacrifice, and is evidence of eternal life. ([The Letters of John by John R. W. Stott](#))

David Allen on laying down one's life for another - I remember when I first read about Boris Kornfeld. I have never forgotten his story. I was in my second year as pastor of my first church in 1983. Chuck Colson's book Loving God had just been published the previous year. Colson told the riveting story of the Jewish doctor in a Russian concentration camp known as a gulag. What crime against the state he had committed no one knows. Kornfeld met a fellow prisoner, a committed Christian whose name we don't know, who engaged him in conversation about Jesus. He often heard the prisoner recite the Lord's Prayer and found himself strangely drawn to the words. While carrying on his medical duties amidst filth and squalor day after day, Kornfeld began to see the parallels in the Jewish people who had suffered so much as a nation and the suffering of Jesus. He became a Christian. When Kornfeld discovered an orderly stealing food from his patients, he reported him to the commandant. Though there had been a rash of murders in the camp, with each victim being a stoolie who had ratted someone else out and then paid for it with his life, Kornfeld didn't care. He knew his life would be in danger as soon as the orderly was released from his cellblock. Kornfeld felt a sense of newfound freedom in Christ. He wanted to tell someone about it, but the prisoner who had spoken to him about Christ had been transferred to another camp. One gray afternoon he examined a patient who had just been operated on for intestinal cancer. The man's eyes were sorrowful and suspicious, thought Kornfeld, and his face reflected the depth of his spiritual and physical misery. So the doctor began to talk to the patient, describing what had happened to him to change his life. Drifting in and out of the anesthesia's influence and shaking with fever, the patient heard the doctor's testimony about Christ and how all of our suffering is in one sense deserved on this earth for our sins. He hung on the doctor's words until he finally fell asleep. The next morning he was awakened by a commotion in the area. He wondered where his doctor friend was. Then a fellow patient told him of Kornfeld's fate. During the night, as Kornfeld slept in the infirmary, someone dealt him fatal blows to his skull with a mallet. Kornfeld died, but his testimony did not. The patient pondered the doctor's last, impassioned words about Christ, suffering, and salvation. He too became a Christian. He survived the prison camp and went on to tell the world what he had learned there. His name was Alexander Solzhenitsyn, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1970 for his major work The Gulag Archipelago, which brought international exposure to the Soviet Union's labor camp system. He was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1974. ([1-3 John- Fellowship in God's Family Preaching the Word](#))

Why Love Begets Hate - Read: John 15:18-27 | [Jesus said], "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you." —John 15:18 - If there is one thing believers in Jesus should be known for, it is love. The word love appears in Scripture more than 500 times. The essence of the gospel is love, as we see in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world ... " The epistle of 1 John 3:16 elaborates: "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us."

Christians are to serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13), love their neighbors as themselves (Galatians 5:14), live a life of love (Ephesians 5:2), and love with actions and in truth (1 John 3:18).

So, if Jesus and His followers are all about love, why do some people love to hate us? Why are there, according to one estimate, 200 million persecuted believers in the world today?

Jesus told us why. He said to His disciples, “Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:20). Jesus is the Light. When He walked this earth, people hated Him because He exposed the darkness of their sin. We are now His light in this world (Matthew 5:14); therefore, the world will also hate us (John 15:19).

Our task is to be channels of God’s love and light, even if we are hated in return. By Dave Branon [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Some will hate you, some will love you;
Some will flatter, some will slight;
Cease from man, and look above you,
Trust in God and do the right. —Macleod

Love in return for love is natural,
but love in return for hate is supernatural.

The Ultimate Sacrifice - Read: 1 John 3:16-23 | When Deng Jinjie saw people struggling in the water of the Sunshui River in the Hunan province of China, he didn’t just walk by. In an act of heroism, he jumped into the water and helped save four members of a family. Unfortunately, the family left the area while he was still in the water. Sadly, Jinjie, exhausted from his rescue efforts, was overwhelmed and swept away by the river current and drowned.

When we were drowning in our sin, Jesus Christ gave His life to come to our aid. We were the ones He came to rescue. He came down from heaven above and pulled us to safety. He did this by taking the punishment for all of our wrongdoing as He died on the cross (1 Peter 2:24) and 3 days later was resurrected. The Bible says, “By this we know love, because [Jesus] laid down His life for us” (1 John 3:16). Jesus’ sacrificial love for us now inspires us to show genuine love “in deed and in truth” (1Jn 3:18) to others with whom we have relationships.

If we overlook Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice on our behalf, we’ll fail to see and experience His love. Today, consider the connection between His sacrifice and His love for you. He has come for your rescue. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

By Jennifer Benson Schuldt
Rescued: By Jesus’ love;
Rescued: For life above;
Rescued: To serve my King;
Rescued: My praise to bring. —Verway

Jesus laid down His life to show His love for us.

INSIGHT: John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7) and to whom Jesus entrusted the care of His mother, Mary (Jn 19:26-27), was well qualified to write about love. In 1 John 2, he described the quality and authenticity of the love expected of the children of God. Here in 1 John 3, he pointed to the death of Christ and directed us to Him as our standard of Christian love (1Jn 3:16). True Christian love is sacrificial action and selfless generosity displayed both in speech and in actions (1Jn 3:16-18).

Oswald Chambers - “Will You Lay Down Your Life?” - Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends....I have called you friends... —John 15:13, 15

Jesus does not ask me to die for Him, but to lay down my life for Him. Peter said to the Lord, “I will lay down my life for Your sake,” and he meant it (John 13:37). He had a magnificent sense of the heroic. For us to be incapable of making this same statement Peter made would be a bad thing— our sense of duty is only fully realized through our sense of heroism. Has the Lord ever asked you, “Will you lay down your life for My sake?” (John 13:38). It is much easier to die than to lay down your life day in and day out with the sense of the high calling of God. We are not made for the bright-shining moments of life, but we have to walk in the light of them in our everyday ways. There was only one bright-shining moment in the life of Jesus, and that was on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was there that He emptied Himself of His glory for the second time, and then came down into the demon-possessed valley (see Mark

9:1-29). For thirty-three years Jesus laid down His life to do the will of His Father. **“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 John 3:16).** Yet it is contrary to our human nature to do so. If I am a friend of Jesus, I must deliberately and carefully lay down my life for Him. It is a difficult thing to do, and thank God that it is. Salvation is easy for us, because it cost God so much. But the exhibiting of salvation in my life is difficult. God saves a person, fills him with the Holy Spirit, and then says, in effect, “Now you work it out in your life, and be faithful to Me, even though the nature of everything around you is to cause you to be unfaithful.” And Jesus says to us, “...I have called you friends....” Remain faithful to your Friend, and remember that His honor is at stake in your bodily life. ([Will You Lay Down Your Life- My Utmost For His Highest](#))