



NG Study Guide: 1Jn. 3:10-23 “Love in Deed” [4.22.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Are you your brother’s keeper? What is your responsibility to neighbors where you live, work, study, play, and worship? What difference does it make? Let’s discover the imperative of love, and the importance of loving in deed and in truth.

1. Righteousness and love [10-15]

¹⁰In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹²not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. ¹³Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

The true child of God [1 Jn. 3:1,10] lives right with God by submitting to His will, and by loving others [10]. Those that don’t yield to God’s commands, or don’t love are not children of God and are thus still under Satan’s primary influence [10]. **Righteousness without love is a religious obstacle to God, and love without righteousness obscures God**, and thus unless both exist evil is present. Love and righteousness have been perfectly manifest and proclaimed by Jesus since the beginning [11, 1Jn. 2:7, Jn. 13:34].

A lack of love is equated with hatred, evil, murder, and reveals that a person is not truly in relationship with God [12-15]. Cain commits the first murder in the Bible, and the victim is his own brother Abel [12, Gen. 4]. Cain was jealous that God had rejected his offering and accepted Abel’s.

Cain rejected God's warning that his anger would dominate him, and he refused to repent. After the murder of Abel, God inquires of Cain about Abel's whereabouts, and Cain famously replies, "Am I my brother's keeper?" [Gen. 4:9]. How we respond to that inquiry reveals our relationship with God. **The true child of God recognizes a special familial relationship and responsibility to other followers of Christ.** Those who claim to follow Jesus can know whether they truly have life with God by their love for other believers [14]. Love is characterized by relationship, and the nature of that relationship will be revealed in the verses that follow [16-23].

On the other hand, those that manifest hatred characterized by malice, wrath, rage, bitterness, indifference, apathy, selfishness and isolation are not likely in relationship with Christ [14-15].

John notes that Jesus' followers should not be surprised if the world hates them [13]. In the culture we live in, the mantra is "love and tolerance." However, when those touted values are challenged by the words and works of Jesus that reveal moral truth, and declare truth about God, the response is hatred not love nor tolerance. Undoubtedly, Jesus' followers will be scorned and mocked as Jesus was when He displayed perfect righteousness and love.

2. Faith and love [16-23]

16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. 20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. 22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

We can know that type of love that reveals a life-giving relationship with God [16]. The Greeks had four words that we translate love. *Eros* relates to erotic or sexual love. *Storge* refers to familial love, especially between a parent and child. *Philia* speaks of brotherly affection. And the ultimate expression of love is *agape* a selfless love.

We can know love by considering the words and works of Jesus including His incarnation and death [16]. Jesus voluntarily leaves His heavenly dwelling and dwells with man in humility, and then gives His life as a perfect sacrifice once and for all so that you can live. Jesus' love is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional, unmerited, and committed. It transcends even the ideal of parental love, because it is given to us even when we were opposed to God [Rom. 5:8].

As followers of Jesus, *we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* [16]. The focus here is on our relationships with other believers, the brethren. We are to place the needs of others before our own desires [Ph.2:3-4]. Real love always involves a sacrifice.

Real faith produces love demonstrated by actions that prove love for God and neighbors [17-18].

If you have the ability to help, but you harden your heart to the needs of others, then God's love is not manifest in you [17]. Words without actions or deeds to prove them are often inadequate. While it is true that none of us can care for all needs, that reality does not justify us from neglecting meaningful acts of charity, kindness, and benevolence to neighbors where you live, work, study, play, and worship.

The gospel is the greatest display of love, and your love should point people to Jesus and His gospel. Demonstrating God's love provides assurance of your relationship with Christ so that you know you are of the truth [19]. Sometimes, our emotions of guilt, condemnation, or self-righteousness can be amiss. You may feel that you're not loving enough or feel that you are plenty loving. You can have confidence that God will reveal your condition with Him as you consider your love for Him and others [20-21].

Real faith impacts your prayer life [22]. Those that know Christ, seek to keep His commandments, and live to please God are likely to be making prayer requests to God that are consistent with His will and thus answered positively by God.

Real faith in Christ and love for neighbors fulfills God's commandment(s) [23, Jn. 20:31, Matt. 22:37-39, Jn. 15:12, Jn. 13:34-35]. We are called to trust in Jesus and submit our lives to Him. Love for others is evidence of our faith in Christ.

Study Guide Qs

Q1 Why might righteousness without love be an obstacle to God? Describe some examples.

Q2 Why might love without righteousness obscure God? Describe some examples.

Q3 What are some of the obstacles to developing meaningful relationships with other believers? What are you doing to overcome those obstacles? How have the changes impacted your life?

Q4 How would you like to apply the lessons of this study in your life in the coming year(s)?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan [Lu. 10:25-37], the expert in the law tries to justify himself by asking, “Who is my neighbor?” In other words, “To whom do I owe a duty to love?” In the parable, Jesus portrays religious people avoiding the need, and a presumed non-religious person, a Samaritan, displaying love through sacrificial care of the wounded Jewish traveler. The story would likely bring conviction to religious people who are so busy with religious activity that they neglect to truly love.

Read the passage, pray, reflect, and consider what changes God would have you make in your life.

2. Real faith and love change your prayers [22]. Spend time praying and considering how you can love God and neighbors better.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

One of the great ways to develop relationships with people is to listen to their life story. As you've engaged neighbors and started to get to know one another, consider taking the next step and get to know their story.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
3. **The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **Every time you meet consider asking:**

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.