

## VOTC 1 – 1 John 3:11-18 – The Message & Meaning of Love

Welcome listener to another episode here at VOTC. Today, we begin a new series of meditations on motivations for Christian love. Before we dig into that, we want to consider more broadly the message and meaning of love.

What if God loved us just by his words? What if scripture was not a recounting of what God has done in history to save his people, but simply a book of *timeless truths*, and *comforting words* about God's love for us? Would mere statements about God's love and various *moral commands* be enough to save us?

1. I think more than ever today, it is easy to get away with cheap love. There are many ways we can proclaim our love, but we can too easily get away with not actually loving ppl w/ our actions. Indeed, if God loved us with *just* words, then we would still be in our sins. We would have no savior, no freedom from sin, and no assurance that Jesus is coming again. We would be without hope in this world.

But in our text today, we see a love demonstrated in the laying down of Christ's life for us. & in view of his love, John calls us to show forth this kind of love. **The Message of Love (v.11-12)**

2. This is the message you have heard from the beginning – that we should love one another. Like a good teacher he repeats this key theme. This phrase, “*love one another*”
3. First, shows us what love *is not*. He calls us not to be like **Cain**. If you know the story from Gen. 4, Cain and Abel were biological brothers, but spiritually they were very different. Only Abel had faith in God. Abel gave an offering to God in faith that costed him something, and Cain gave to God an offering that wasn't as costly and didn't flow from faith. So, God accepted Abel's offering, and not Cains. So, he became angry and jealous and he murdered his brother.
4. John writes earlier in chapter 2 “*whoever hates his brother is a murderer; & you know that no murder has eternal life abiding in him*” (v.15). John is clear, if someone's life is characterized by hatred & anger, they abide in death.
5. The Christian isn't to be **marked** by hate, but by love. When God saves a person, he *evicts* hatred from the home of our hearts, and he puts in a *new tenant* - the Holy Spirit. And the chief fruit of the Spirit is love.
6. Christianity is never about just having the right knowledge about God, but also the right love for God & for people. Jesus said in **Jn. 13:35**, “*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” The love of a Christian is what makes a person stand out in this hate filled world.
  - a. Dr MLK put it this way, “we must discover the redemptive power of love. And when we do that, we will make of this old world, a new world.” Think of all the issues going on today that weigh on our <3s. What would this world look like if it was marked by love? What it would look like of love filled the hearts of men?

7. In a world of so much division & injustice, love is to be the peculiar mark of God's ppl. What does this love look like in real time? **The Meaning of Love (v.16-19)**
8. There is a famine of love in the world right now, & people are desperately searching for real love. Many people define love in various ways. But who can show us better what love is than God himself, the source of love?
9. God shows us that love is more than words & good intentions. Love is beautifully expressed in **v.16**. "*by this we know love, that he laid down his life for us.*" Here is love, God didn't just give us book that described love in words, but the Word became flesh & showed us in a tangible way the love of God,
  - a. **Phil 2:6-8**, "*Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*"
10. Jesus gave up his divine privileges to save us. He was so committed to the plan of his Father that he laid down his life for sinners at the cross. To lay down one's life means to give up something that is precious to you in order to serve and help another person.
  - a. This is what Jesus as our Good Shepherd. In his life he showed constant care for his sheep, and at the end he laid down for our sins. **John 10:11**
11. John says, "*so we also ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*" \*\*\*The cross must inform how we live & how we love. The gospel is not just about us and God, & our own ticket to heaven, but the gospel leads us to be people of love. What do we learn about Xp's love?
12. Love is costly - It is about *laying down your life for the good of others*. But to lay down one's life doesn't just mean we are willing to die or take a bullet for them. That can be pretty heroic. But laying down our lives is a *daily* choice die to self for the sake of the other. To prefer the interest of others above our own. Lay aside privilege, status, so on
  - a. What's beautiful in God's sight is a mother's daily sacrifice of herself for her children. Costly love is a husband loving his wife as Christ loved the church, by caring for her own needs above his own. Costly love is investing time/energy into broken & struggling people to help bring them closer to Xp. Jesus said in **J 15:13**, "*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends*"
13. Love is a particular & concrete - If anyone sees *his brother* in need. For, John views this brother is a person, not just a problem that needs to be fixed. It's easy to love a *cause*, or to just think, "I'm a loving person." But what do you *do* when you see a particular brother or sister in need?
14. John says, "if we have the world's good (material possession or wealth that can benefit someone), how can we *close our hearts* against them, if we show them no compassion.

15. John reminds us that *if* the Spirit of Christ, the one who laid down his life for us, is at work in our hearts, how can we not practically care for our brothers & sisters in their time of need?
16. Love is *more than words* - John says, “*let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*” According to John, true Christian love should show up in concrete ways - on our *bank statements* and our grocery receipts. If someone were to look at your *schedule* this week, or look at your *check book*, could they see evidence of love for brothers and sisters in Christ?
17. There is a famine of love in the world today. There are people lonely, struggling, battling various struggles. God is calling to love with our words AND deeds. Because that is what Christ did for us! God loved this world with more than words! He sent Jesus to lay his life down in order to raise us up. May that be our hearts desire as we mediate on the message and meaning of love.

*Thank you for joining us today, we hope you'll join us next time for our next mediation as we consider various motivations from God's word that help us to love more like him.*