Series: That You May Know

Inductive Bible Study Guide: 1 John

Inductive Bible Study of 1 John 3:11-24

John shows that love is one of the clearest signs that God's life is at work in us. Cain's hatred stands in direct contrast to Jesus, who laid down His life for us. Christian love is more than words or feelings; it acts to meet real needs. As we believe in Jesus, love one another, and remain in Him, God gives us confidence before Him and assures us by His Spirit.

Step 1 – Observation: *What does the passage say?*

Read 1 John 3:11-24 slowly at least three times, using more than one translation if possible. Pay attention to repeated words, contrasts, commands, and the examples John uses to explain love and hatred.

Observation Prompts

- What words or ideas are repeated?
- What contrasts do you notice?
- What does John say about Cain?
- How is love defined and demonstrated?
- What is said about the heart and confidence?
- What commands and promises close the passage?

Read the Passage and Record What You See

1. What message have believers heard from the beginning?

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2. How is Cain described, and why did he murder his brother?

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3. What does John say about the world's hatred and passing from death to life?

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4. What does verse 15 say about hatred, murder, and eternal life?

5. How does verse 16 say we know what love is, and what should believers do in response?

6. What situation does John describe in verse 17, and what question does he ask?

7. How does verse 18 contrast words and talk with deed and truth?

8. What do verses 19-20 say about our hearts and God's knowledge?

9. What results are connected with a heart that does not condemn us in verses 21-22?

10. What commandment, promise of abiding, and evidence of the Spirit appear in verses 23-24?

Step 2 – Interpretation: *What does the passage mean?*

John does not treat love as a vague feeling. Jesus defines love by laying down His life, and His followers reflect that love through sacrifice, generosity, and practical care. Hatred belongs to the realm of death, while love for other believers gives evidence that God has brought us into life.

John also connects love and obedience with assurance. Our confidence does not rest on a perfect conscience or on earning God's favor. God knows us more fully than we know ourselves, and His Spirit confirms that He remains in us. Christlike Character grows from a life shaped by faith in Jesus, love for others, and a desire to please God.

Questions to Explore

1. Why does John describe loving one another as the message heard from the beginning? How is love connected with the gospel?

2. What does Cain reveal about the relationship between evil, jealousy, hatred, and violence?

3. Why might the world hate those who belong to Christ? How should believers respond without returning hatred for hatred?

4. What does it mean to pass from death to life, and why is love for other believers evidence of that change?

5. In what sense is hatred like murder? What does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:21-24 add to your understanding?

6. How does Jesus laying down His life define love? How do verses 17-18 apply that love to ordinary needs and resources?

7. What might it mean for our heart to condemn us? How does the truth that God is greater than our heart bring both comfort and honest examination?

8. How should the promise about receiving what we ask be understood alongside obedience, pleasing God, and praying according to His will in 1 John 5:14?

9. Why does John combine believing in Jesus and loving one another in one commandment? How do abiding and the Holy Spirit give assurance?

Word Study Suggestions

- **Love:** Greek agape – Sacrificial self-giving love that seeks another person's good.
- **Lay down:** Greek tithemi - to place, set down, or give up; used here of Jesus giving His life.
- **Deed and truth:** Greek ergon and aletheia - action and reality; love made visible through genuine action.
- **Condemn:** Greek kataginosko - to find fault with, blame, or pronounce guilty.
- **Confidence:** Greek parresia - boldness, openness, or freedom to approach without fear.
- **Abide or remain:** Greek meno - to remain, continue, stay, or dwell.

Step 3 – Application: *How should I respond?*

John calls us to examine whether our love is visible. We may speak kindly and agree with the idea of love, yet still ignore a person whose need is within our ability to meet. The love of Jesus moves toward people and willingly gives.

This passage also invites us to bring both our actions and our anxious hearts before God. We can respond to genuine conviction with repentance while refusing to let vague shame have the final word. God knows the truth, gives confidence through Christ, and helps us remain in Him by His Spirit.

Personal Reflection

1. Who in your life needs more than kind words from you right now? What practical act of love can you offer?

2. Is there bitterness, jealousy, resentment, or hatred that you need to confess and surrender to God?

3. What resource, possession, time, or ability could you use to meet another person's need?

4. When your heart condemns you, is God revealing a specific sin to confess, or are you carrying shame He has already answered in Christ?

5. How might obedience and a desire to please God reshape what you are asking Him for in prayer?

6. What specific step will help you remain in Jesus, trust the Spirit, and love someone in deed and truth this week?

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Summary Truths

- Loving one another has been central to the Christian message from the beginning.
- Cain shows where jealousy/hatred lead; love gives evidence we have passed from death to life.
- Jesus defines love by laying down His life. His followers are called to practice sacrificial love.
- Love must become visible in deed and truth, especially when we can help meet a real need.
- God is greater than our hearts and knows everything, so our assurance rests in His truth rather than our shifting feelings.
- God commands us to believe in Jesus and love one another; abiding obedience and the Holy Spirit strengthen our assurance.

Optional Memory Verse

*"Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."***1 John 3:18 ESV**

Prayer Prompt

"Father, thank You for showing me love through Jesus. Remove hatred, jealousy, and selfishness from my heart. Teach me to love people through genuine action and sacrifice. When my heart condemns me, lead me to honest repentance and confidence in Your truth. Help me believe in Jesus, obey Your commands, remain in You, and follow the leading of Your Spirit. Amen."

For Further Study

- **John 13:34-35**
  - How does Jesus' love become the pattern and identifying mark of His disciples?
- **Matthew 5:21-24**
  - How does Jesus trace murder back to anger and broken relationships in the heart?
- **James 2:14-17**
  - What does James say about faith that sees a need but offers only words?
- **1 John 4:7-21**
  - What additional reasons does John give for believers to love one another?

Homework for next week

Read 1 John again

- Notice how John connects faith in Jesus, love, obedience, assurance, and the Holy Spirit.

Prepare for the next lesson

- Read 1 John 4:1-6 and watch for spirit, test, confess, Jesus Christ, God, world, truth, and error.