

# Love & Assurance

1 John 3:11-24

## The Message

📖 “For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.” (3:11)

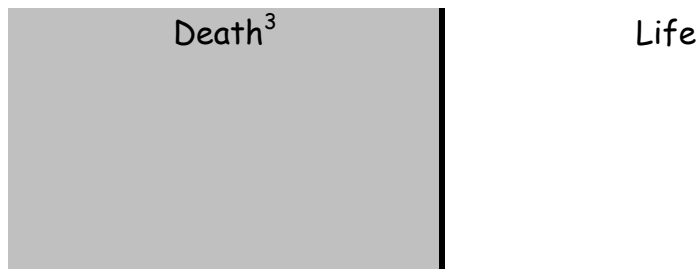
## Bad Example

1. Read 1 John 3:12-15. The story of Cain is recorded in Genesis 4:2-12.<sup>1</sup> Why did Cain murder his brother? What motivated his actions? (3:12) How common is Cain’s attitude today?

📖 *Jesus said*, “If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first” (*John 15:18, NIV*).

2. What does “hating one’s brother or sister” indicate about a person?<sup>2</sup> (3:15)

📖 *Jesus said*, “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.” (*Matt. 5:21-22a, NIV*)



## Good Example (the Supreme Example!)

3. Read 1 John 3:16-18. In what specific ways does Jesus’ example contrast with Cain’s example?<sup>4</sup>

📖 “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (*John 15:13*)

<sup>1</sup> This story is not discussed in detail here. If you have any questions about it, contact Jay for additional notes.

<sup>2</sup> John says here, and Jesus indicates elsewhere, that a person who hates his brother is similar to a murderer. Both have hateful hearts. See Matthew 5:21-22.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Death’ in this context refers to spiritual death, and is coincident with ‘darkness.’ “Anyone who ... hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness” (*1 John 2:9, NIV*)

<sup>4</sup> Instead of hate, Jesus loved. Instead of murder (taking the life of another person for selfish reasons), Jesus gave his own life for the good of others.

4. Certainly, only Jesus can die for the sins of the world (*1 John 2:2*). While it is possible that we might literally die for our brother(s) or sister(s), it is more likely that we will give ourselves in other ways. In what specific ways should we express love for others? (*3:17-18*)



## Blessed Assurance

5. Read 1 John 3:19-24. When “our hearts condemn us,” how can we “set our hearts at rest?” In other words, according to verses 19-20, how can we experience assurance of our relationship with God even when our conscience accuses us or condemns us?<sup>5</sup>

- ❑ In verse 23, John states *two* actions, but includes them in one, single command. This is significant. True Christianity involves both belief and practice.<sup>6</sup> To *truly* believe in Christ is to believe the truth about him and to entrust one’s life to him, and that includes obeying him.
6. How can we know that God lives in us?

- 📖 *Jesus said, “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” (John 15:10, NIV)*<sup>7</sup>
- 📖 “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” (*Romans 8:16*)
- 📖 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (*Galatians 5:22-23a, NIV*)

## Reflection/Application

- Consider the attitudes of Cain and Jesus. Is your attitude more like Cain’s, or more like Jesus’? If you think your attitude is more like Jesus’, exactly how are you demonstrating it? Think of someone in need, and make a specific commitment to express love to that person.
- The ability and power to love as God expects comes from Him through faith in Jesus Christ. Do you need to place your faith in Christ, so that God lives in you?
- As a Christian, do you sometimes have doubts concerning your relationship with God? Go to God with a sincere and open heart, knowing that he is a loving, gracious and forgiving God. Open your heart to His love, and truly commit yourself to loving others by His grace.

<sup>5</sup> ‘This’ in verse 19 points back to verses 16-18. Verse 20 gives additional reason for assurance. Three actors are present in verse 20: 1) *heart* as our accuser; 2) *us* as defendant; and 3) *God* as the perfect Judge. Our hearts (or consciences) may accuse us rightly or wrongly. But God is the perfect Judge who knows us better than we know ourselves. If we are sincere and open before God, and loving others by His grace, we will have peace with God, and we can set our hearts at rest.

<sup>6</sup> Some say that they believe in Jesus Christ, but they fail to love others. Other people try to reduce Christianity to the one command: love others. For them, it does not matter what you believe, if you love other people, then that is ‘Christian.’ However, genuine Christianity involves both belief and practice.

<sup>7</sup> It should be emphasized that we do not earn our relationship with God by our own efforts! A person lives in God (and God lives in him or her) only by God’s grace, through faith, not by human effort. But true faith is demonstrated and strengthened by obedience and love.