

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Down-to-Earth Love
1 John 3:11—4:21

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #...). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader: You may want to have a white board or large piece of paper on which to write the findings of the group related to "Dear friends" and "Dear children" as used by John throughout the book of 1 John.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Make Me a Servant, *The Worship Hymnal* # 381, CCLI # 33131

The Servant Song, *The Worship Hymnal* # 384, CCLI # 72763

They'll Know We Are Christians, *The Worship Hymnal* # 385, CCLI # 26997

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Down-to-Earth Love

Focal Text

1 John 3:11-18, 21-24; 4:7-21

Background

1 John 3:11—4:21

Main Idea

Genuine Christian love—a command and not an option—is founded on God's love in giving his Son and characterized by willingness to give our lives and possessions for other people.

Question to Explore

How would obeying God's command to love have changed your actions last week?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to identify motivations for showing genuine Christian love and describe how their daily actions would change if they showed such love consistently.

Gathering together:

Sing: **Make Me a Servant**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 381, CCLI # 33131

A quote found on a prayer calendar said, "If you want to work alongside Jesus, you may want to consider meeting Him in the soup kitchen. (Marsha Spradlin, source unknown). Today's scripture will challenge us to look beyond the comfortable confines of our existence and seek new and challenging ways to serve others.

A church is involved in an emphasis entitled Blessed to be a Blessing. The weekly bulletin insert includes a Scripture passage – Connect with His Word, a prayer list – Connect with God; a testimony from someone in the church – Connect with His Church and a list of practical suggestions for ministry called Connect with His Mission. One week the list included:

Bring popsicles or soft drinks to a sports field (soccer, etc.) to give away in Jesus' name

- Mow a neighbour's grass
- Organize a block party to get to know your neighbours
- Cook a meal for someone who is sick, pregnant or elderly
- Surprise someone with flowers
- Encourage your kids to draw pictures or cards for an elderly neighbour or friend.

These ideas fit this particular body of Christ. As you study scripture today, ask what your family or church could put on a similar kind of list.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Down-to-Earth Love

Focal Text

1 John 3:11-18, 21-24; 4:7-21

Background

1 John 3:11—4:21

Main Idea

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Question to Explore

How would obeying God's command to love have changed your actions last week?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to identify motivations for showing genuine Christian love and describe how their daily actions would change if they showed such love consistently.

Introduction to your personal study:

This is an intensely personal study. Ask God to transform your thinking and actions as you study to lead your group.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

1 John 3:11-18

The passages to be examined today – 1 John 3: 10-24 and 4: 7-21 are evidences which distinguish between God's children and the devil's children (Carroll, B.H. **The Pastoral Epistles of Paul and I and II Peter, Jude, and I, II, and III John**, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company 1915, page 347). The overwhelming manifestation of the difference is that of love. Love for brothers in the faith is the emphasis here.

1 John 2: 7 stated "Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. The old command is the message you have heard". At the heart of the message of Christ was the command to love one another.

John must be emphasizing it again because it is a difficult thing to achieve. Loving the person who lives in a faraway continent may be easier than loving the fellow Christian whose theological views differ or whose attitude toward how the church budget should be spent seem extravagant. This is a challenge whatever the size of the church and is certainly true for home churches. One of the most critical challenges for churches over the last twenty years has been the differences in opinion in the kind of music which is appropriate for worship.

Why is it so important that Christian brothers love one another. It is important because it is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate to the world what love can really be like.

The example which the author uses in verse 12 is the story of two brothers – Cain and Abel. The account of Cain and Abel is found in Genesis 4. Evil existed in the heart of Cain. He brought an offering to the Lord from the produce he raised. The offering was not acceptable to God because of the attitude of Cain's heart.

Abel brought an offering from his flock and it was acceptable. There is no reason to assume that the offering from the flock had more value in the sight of the Lord than the offering from the field. It was the attitude of the heart which made one offering acceptable and the other unacceptable.

Cain was so angry that he asked Abel to go out into the field. The sparse language of the Genesis account gives no indication whether Abel knew of his brother's anger or evil intention. But in the field, Cain killed his own brother. His foul deed was the natural expression of a sinful life.

The account of this early murder is given in 1 John to emphasize the need for brother to love brother and to emphasize how quickly our own sinful attitude can lead to action which has consequences for all of life and even for our descendants. 1 John asks,

“And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous.”

Verse 13 continues the theme of jealousy of the one who is righteous. John says ***Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.*** Righteous people usually do not win popularity contests. Christian young people discover this when they are left out of the “in” crowd in high school. Many areas of work are hostile to the Christian ethical convictions.

The danger, of course, is that we can also be disliked for attitudes which are unloving and judgmental. The history of Christianity is rife with examples of injustices done by Christians to others – to other believers as well as those of other faiths or no faith. We cannot make those events go away but we can live our lives today in love for others.

“The cosmic struggle between good and evil going on in the universe is reenacted in the moral battles each man fights. ...It is possible for men to be so possessed by evil that the contemplation of goodness goads them to madness and impels them to destroy that which could save them. Men resist goodness because it judges them, and rather than accept judgment they will destroy the judge. The lineage of Abel and Cain extends... Every man belongs to the brotherhood either of Cain or of Christ” (**The Interpreter’s Bible**, Volume 12, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957, page 262).

“Love is the criterion by which the children of God may judge their membership in the family of God: ***We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love our brothers.*** John gives us here not the only test of salvation but certainly one of the most important of all criteria by which an individual may judge as to whether or not he is a child of God. The test is: Does he love his Christian brothers? This brings us face to face with the question as to what love for *the brethren* is. By degrees, as we follow John’s explanations of love’s nature and working, we shall find the answer to the question.

In John’s view, love is the determinative factor as to whether an individual lives in the realm of life or the realm of death” (**The Broadman Bible Commentary**, Volume 12, Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1972, page 211).

John equates the thought and desire with the deed; he makes hatred of one’s brother murder itself. ***Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him (verse 15).***

These words should make us tremble. We may not admit to others or even to ourselves that the negative feelings we have toward fellow believers fit in the category of hatred, but we certainly need to bring those negative feelings to the Lord and ask forgiveness and help to overcome the negative attitude we have.

Verse 16 gives us the definition which John has for loving our brother. This is how we know what love is: **Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.**

“By this we know love - The redeeming truth is this: The character of the love that brings men into life has been once and for all definitely revealed in Christ. Before Christ, men had known love such as Jacob’s, David and Jonathan’s, the patriot’s, the martyr’s, and the prophet’s, but until **he laid down his life for us** the fullness of love was wanting. ... The essence of absolute love is self-denial to the point of death for others (verse 16a). The Cross was the inevitable issue of the kind of life Jesus lived. ...Jesus denied himself, however, not for a principle or a cause, but **for us**, i.e. for people. ... mere self-denial is not love. Only when man surrenders that which has value for his own life in order to enrich the life of another does he love” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*, pages 263-264).

Many believers, perhaps most believers, are not called on to lay down their lives for a brother. But John states a very practical application for us: **If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?**

This passage brings great tension for us as Christians, because we daily see or hear about people in need. We cannot meet every need we encounter, but we should constantly be aware that stewardship of the resources God gives us requires careful consideration of how we may put those resources to good use in meeting the needs of the world – physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Christians should be – and often are – leaders in desiring a more simple life style in order to have more resources to share with others. But those who live in developed countries are constantly bombarded with messages which encourage one to buy more and especially to update older (thought seldom old) technologies. The tension which John introduced continues – how can we have the love of God in us if we spend all of our resources in acquiring more material possessions for our own pleasure and benefit.

Verse 18 emphasizes that love must be more than words – it must involve action. **Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.** The world waits - the children and young people of our church wait to see us put the words we speak into action.

1 John 3: 21-24

Verse 21 indicates that we are before God and can ask from him because we have obeyed his commands: **Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.**

The commands are clear: believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ and love one another.

We can know that Christ lives in us when we keep these commands. The Spirit lives within us to confirm that we know Him.

God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit are all mentioned in verses 21-24.

The Spirit is essential in the verses which follow in chapter 4 which deal with understanding which spirits are of God.

1 John 4: 7-12

“Here we begin the greatest dissertation (4:7-5:12) on Christian love to be found in the New Testament with one exception, 1 Corinthians 13”. “John left no doubt of his conviction of the supremacy of love with his unique and daring declaration: **God is love** (4:8, 16)” (**Broadman Bible Commentary**, page 214).

We remember that in Chapter 1: 5, John had declared **God is light**. These two declarations: **God is light** and **God is love** give a picture of God which should sustain us through every one of life’s circumstances. These give us a picture about the character of God.

“It speaks to us eloquently of God as a person, for love does not exist apart from a person. It is the supreme characteristic of which a person is capable. God is love tells us the kind of person who presides over the universe. He is *the* person who through love begets children and implants in them the love that is the distinguishing characteristic of Father and children” (**Broadman**, page 217).

Chapter 4:7 begins with John’s address: Dear friends. In chapter 2:1, he said **My dear children** and in chapter 2: 7 he said **Dear friends**. He uses **dear children** again in 2:12, 13, 18, 28 and again in chapter 3: 7, 18 and chapter 4: 4, and 5:21. He uses **dear friends** in chapter 3:2, 21 and chapter 4: 1, 7, 11. He also addresses specific groups – fathers and young men. John speaks to people from a heart of love for the brother; he has learned to do what he is advocating that others do. His love for others spills over into his writing.

The test of knowing God as indicated in verses 7 and 8 is that of love for others. “Love is the distinguishing mark of the child of God” (**Broadman**, page 216).

Verse 9 is one of the wonderful verses which expresses the truth of God’s love. This is how God showed his love among us: **He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him**.

Verse 10 indicates that God loved us first. “The supreme expression of love is God’s sending of his Son into the world” (**Broadman**, page 217). The son came to be the atoning sacrifice (propitiation, expiation are theological terms used for this reality).

Thus, God’s children must love one another. This is the only worthy response to the love which God expressed in sending His one and only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Verse 12 expresses the reality that although humans have not actually seen God, we have seen other humans. To love them then is an expression of our love for God. “In loving one another we bring the invisible God into the realm of human experience – **if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us** (verse 12). The perfect passive participle is translated by **is perfected**. The meaning is that God’s love is made real, tangible, concrete in and through the Christian fellowship when the children of God practice love toward one another” (**Broadman**, page 217).

1 John 4: 13-21

Christian assurance is real through possession of the Spirit of God. “The assurance is of the indivisible unity existing between God the Father and his children: **we abide in him and he in us**. The assurance is based upon the knowledge that God has given (perfect tense) us of his Spirit and that the historic descent of the Spirit at Pentecost guarantees that the Spirit is a permanent gift to believers. The expression **of his own Spirit** emphasizes the fact that the Spirit belongs to the very person of God and when present in men is God himself in them” (**Broadman**, page 218).

Verses 14-16 recognizes the love of God in sending his Son to be the Saviour of the world. Verses 16b-18 indicates that an individual who lives a life controlled by love possess the Spirit of God and thereby partakes of the nature of God so that he is in union with God. This gives us confidence in the day of judgment; we will have no fear for we are abiding in the very love of God. “When we love we are bearing on us the reflection of God, and we are living the very life of God. Love makes us kin to God. He who dwells in love dwells in God (verse 16). Man is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). God is love, and , therefore, to be like God, to be what he was meant to be, man must also love” (Barclay, Wm. **The Daily Study Bible, The Letters of John and Jude**. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, page 115).

“When love comes, fear goes (verses 17 and 18). Fear is the characteristic emotion of someone who expects to be punished. So long as we regard God as the Judge, the King, the Law-giver, there can be nothing in our heart, but a dominant emotion of fear, for in the face of such a God we could expect nothing but punishment, and even annihilation. But once we know that God is love, fear is swallowed up in love. It is true that in its place there is left a different kind of fear, the fear of grieving the love which so loved us” (**Barclay**, page 116).

Verses 19-21 return to the theme of love for the brother as the expression of love for God - "Human love is a response to divine love" (**Barclay**, page 116). It is impossible to love God if we cannot love our brother. John uses strong words- ***If anyone says "I love God" yet hates his brother, he is a liar.***

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Today's lesson should lead each participant to examine the lack of love for the brothers who annoy, disagree with, or have betrayed us. From a human standpoint, it may be legitimate to have an unloving attitude toward these people. From the teaching of the passage, however, we must leave these feelings behind and ask God to help us love because He first loved us.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Down-to-Earth Love

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

1 John 3:11-18, 23-24; 4:7-21

Background

1 John 3:11—4:21

Main Idea

Genuine Christian love—a command and not an option—is founded on God's love in giving his Son and characterized by willingness to give our lives and possessions for other people.

Question to Explore

How would obeying God's command to love have changed your actions last week?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to identify motivations for showing genuine Christian love and describe how their daily actions would change if they showed such love consistently.

Connect with Life:

Connect with the group: This is not a lesson about facts. Most of the truths of this lesson are known to Christians. But the teaching of the lesson is so difficult to live out that the purpose of this lesson is to cause us to carefully examine our lives to determine where our failure to love is hindering our Christian growth.

Guide the Study:

Have someone read 1 John 3: 11-18.

Discuss the teaching of 1 John 3: 11: Jesus' message from the beginning was **Love one another**. However, John teaches that Jesus was with God In the beginning (See John 1:1). Further, he teaches that **God is love**. The intention of God was always that His Creation would love and care for all of creation. When sin entered into the picture, that purpose was distorted.

Review the story of Cain and Abel. Do not assume that everyone in your group will know the story. John uses this story to show how quickly evil manifested itself in an act of violence of one brother against another. This was the opposite of the desire of God that we love one another.

Ask: Why does evil resent goodness? Consider the reality that some actions of Christians appear self-righteous and bigoted to others.

Inquire: In verse 14 what is the way we can know that we have passed out of death into life? (We love our brothers).

Comment: John equates the thought and desire with the deed; he makes hatred of one's brother murder itself. **Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him (verse 15).**

Ask: According to verse 16, how do we know what love is?

Discuss the practical implementation of expressing the love of God which is given in verse 17.

Encourage the group to consider ways in which we can simplify our life styles in order to have more resources to share with the needy.

Have someone read 1 John 3: 21-24

Comment: In verse 20 John tells us that God understands the intentions of our hearts – he knows everything. We can feel guilty about many things – one of which would be our inability to meet the needs of everyone around us. God knows our desires. Therefore, our hearts should be at ease and we should have confidence in God to ask what is needed.

Have someone reread verse 23.

Inquire: What are the commands we are to obey? (to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another).

Ask: Are God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit all mentioned in verses 21-24? (Yes – God, verse 21; his Son, Jesus Christ, verse 23; the Spirit, verse 24).

Have someone read 1 John 4: 7-12.

Comment: This begins the greatest writing on love in the New Testament other than 1 Corinthians 13. It is a passage we should study and remember to reference.

Have someone read verses 4: 8 and 16.

Look for an answer: What is the great declaration given here? (God is love).

Continue: What other great declaration about the very nature of God has John given? (God is light in 1 John 1:5).

Consider: What is the difference between saying that God loves and saying that God is love? (Emphasize that the very character of God is love).

Encourage the group to quickly review 1 John and find the greetings “Dear Friends” and “Dear children”.

Question the group: What does this indicate about John’s relationship to his readers? (You may want to record these on a white board or large piece of paper – watch your time!)

Have someone reread verse 9.

Ask: Of what other familiar verse does this remind us? (John 3:16).

Add: Why did God send his son into the world? (to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins).

Invite the group to answer: What is the only worthy response to such love?

Consider: Have we seen God? Have we seen other people? To love others is an expression of our love for God.

Have verse 12 read from several different versions of the Bible.

Canvass the group for these words: What are some of the words used to express how His love exists in us? (complete, is perfected).

Comment: The meaning here is that God's love is made real, tangible, concrete in and through the Christian fellowship when the children of God practice love toward one another.

Have someone read 1 John 4: 13-21.

Call for answers to these questions:

How do we have the assurance that we live in God and He in us? (The Holy Spirit helps us know that we live in Him and He in us).

What is the teaching of verses 14-16? (John repeats that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world and that when we acknowledge Christ as Saviour we experience God in us).

Do we need to be fearful of the day of judgment? (No, we do not fear God's punishment if we have acknowledged Christ as Saviour. We are abiding in the very love of God).

Comment: John ends this chapter with a return to his emphasis upon the fact that to love God is to love one's brother.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Give an opportunity for silent prayer. Many in the group will want to acknowledge unloving attitudes toward fellow Christians.

Encourage the group to pray for a greater ability to love those who are non-believers especially those who hold beliefs opposed to their own belief system. If your country is at war, pray for the enemy.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Down-to-Earth Love

1 John 3:11—4:21

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

A beautiful, outgoing, and talented young woman is going to university to study tourism and hospitality. What will be the challenges she will face in this profession as a dedicated Christian.

Make a list of occupations which you are considering or which are being considered by your friends. Draw a line through those which would require one to compromise beliefs which are important to you.

For example, would the job you are considering require you to serve alcoholic drinks?

Would the job you are considering cause you to compromise beliefs you hold about care of the environment?

Would the job cause you to advertise products which you believe to be harmful?

3

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Down-to-Earth Love

1 John 3:11—4:21

Beginning the Service:

Sing:

The Servant Song, *The Worship Hymnal* # 384, CCLI # 72763

They'll Know We Are Christians, *The Worship Hymnal* # 385, CCLI # 26997

Offering:

Praying for the World:

The Yucuna of Colombia are isolated from the rest of the world by the thick Amazon jungle, by rivers raging through rapids and waterfall, and by guerrilla soldiers. They live in spiritual darkness and fear. Those who manage to leave and move to the city are overwhelmed with worldly distractions and find it almost impossible to return to their home.

Until recently, there was no evangelical work among the Yucuna. They are spiritually hungry and weary of living in fear and poverty. Please pray that the Yucuna will hear and understand the message of hope that they can have in Jesus Christ.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Love Your Enemies Matthew 5: 43-48

John emphasized the importance of loving the brother in Christ. John's message contains great statements of the reason for Christ's entry into the world. ***And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.*** John's emphasis on loving the brother does not preclude loving the ones who are not yet believers. His words are a great call to the believer to demonstrate God's love by living in the peaceful, caring way with fellow Christians precisely so that non-believers will want to know the Saviour of the world.

Jesus in the passage in Matthew emphasizes love of one's enemies. This is a radical call to love.

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even unbelievers do that? Be perfect, then as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus speaks to the natural human reality – we love those we are close to and we dislike or hate those who differ from us – especially those who have for whatever reason become identified as the enemy.

Like John who calls for a radical rethinking when he declares, ***Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer***, Jesus asks his hearers to consider a possibility that goes against what is normally understood - ***Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.***

Jesus Like John emphasizes that loving another is the way we are like the Father in heaven. ***No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*** God's love is made real, tangible, and concrete in and through Christian fellowship when the children of God practice love toward one another.

God's love is made real, tangible and concrete when the children of God practice love toward those who are "the enemy".

Jesus said, ***Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.***

John and Jesus both teach that our identification with the Father must be expressed in love for others.

Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies. This may not change our enemies, but it will change our attitude toward them. The heart of the Christian should be broken for those who live in darkness, who hate goodness and love evil. The heart of the Christian must yearn to share the gospel with those whose place of birth and life circumstance make it inevitable that they embrace a religious belief other than faith in Christ.

Religious tensions, political systems, economic greed and uncertainty make it imperative that we hear the words of Jesus: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.**

Jesus calls to a higher level of living than the unbelieving world. John did that, too. We are called to love others.

John said: ***God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him.***

Jesus said: ***Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.***

Call to Commitment:

The Christian life calls for radical love towards the brother in Christ and towards the person we dislike or do not know. To love like that makes it evident that we live in God and God lives in us. The question we asked in the study of God's word remains:

How would obeying God's command to love have changed your actions last week?

Concluding the Service:

They'll Know We Are Christians, *The Worship Hymnal* # 385, CCLI # 26997