

Bible Study 1 John 3:11-24

¹¹For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹²Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

¹⁶This 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 and sisters. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

¹⁹This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. (NIV)

Anger and love are two of the strongest human emotions. Anger can tear a person apart, internally, and, in turn, tear apart even the most significant and closest relationships. By contrast, love can forge a life-long bond, even between unrelated people.

The apostle John draws a sharp contrast between love and hate. Again, he highlights that we, as Jesus' disciples, are required to love each other. This is counter-cultural to the way of the world and the evil one.

Acts of violence – including domestic violence, murder and terrorism – are a frequent focus of news media – and are something we all condemn.

- How do you respond to these news items?
- What do you think motivates people to act this way?

John refers to the story of Cain and Able, recorded in Genesis 4: 1-16, where Cain murdered his brother.

- What does this passage tell us about Cain's motive for murdering his brother? (3:12)
- In Gen 4:5-6 and 9b, what other emotions did Cain experience?

Each of us experience different emotions, especially when we are hurt, offended, insulted or abused. The degree of emotion can range from annoyance to extreme anger. Even Jesus experienced anger, but without sinning. The New Testament has numerous references to anger:

- 1 Cor 13:5 (Love) does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
- Eph 4:26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,
- Eph 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.
- Col 3:8 you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.
- 1 Tim 2:8 I want the (people) everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.
- James 1:20 human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires

- How do you deal with anger towards other people in a timely and positive way?
- Is this something you find difficult or struggle with?
- In 3:19 – John hints that if we don't have peace in God's presence, there's probably an internal conflict in our hearts. God knows your heart and your struggles with other people in your life.
- IF NECESSARY: STOP now – and pray for each other.

Read Matthew 5:22 and 1 John 3:22. As one of the disciples, John had heard Jesus preach repeatedly about the importance of love in the kingdom of God.

- What do these passages teach us about hate and anger towards a fellow believer?
- The word “raca” means ‘empty-headed’ or ‘stupid’. Broadly, it can be any denigrating comment about another person, including character assassination.
- What is God’s attitude towards these actions and attitudes?
- ‘Do not murder’ is one of the 10 commandments. Does God distinguish between the ‘badness’ of a terrorism act vs an attitude of contempt towards another believer?

The sermon referred to three things that are the ‘acid test’ of true discipleship and are frequently mentioned in John’s letter:

- 3:14 L
- 3:22 O
- 3:23 B

John had heard Jesus teach that we are his friends if we do what he commands us to do (John 15:14). The apostle James wrote that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:14ff). Paul wrote that faith and generosity without love are futile. (1 Cor 13:2-3). All of these three things are connected.

John does not just confront the attitude and actions of ‘hate’ and murder, but also the attitude of lovelessness.

- Does John regard a loveless attitude (or slackness) towards another believer as equal or equivalent to hate? Or is there a difference? (3:14b)

John gives us 5 characteristics of Christian love:

- 3:14 Love is Intentional: seeking out ways to show love to fellow believers;
- 3:16 Love is Sacrificial: laying down our lives for each other;
- 3:17 Love is Sensitive: shown by empathy and compassion towards each other, especially attending to practical needs;
- 3:18 Love is Sincere and Genuine: love that translates into action and is not merely ‘words’;
- 3:16 Love is Christ-centred: love that reflects a growing understanding of how great Jesus’ love is for us and how he has demonstrated that love.

- What needs do you currently have in your home group or Connect group?
- How can you practically help each other in the next fortnight?

Retired NSW RFS Chaplain, Major Ron Anderson, used *The Firefighters’ Prayer* in many contexts during his ministry. It is a reminder to us that – in the midst of the spiritual battle – we must rely on each other and work together, so that we may bring salvation to as many as possible.

“O God, You have given us the task of helping those in trouble and danger, of saving life and property. Help us to do our job well, to do it with pride and pleasure, for sometimes we risk our lives. When we think of the dangers and we remember those who gave their lives in facing them, help us to remember what Jesus said: ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ We thank you for the mateship we enjoy, And for our loved ones who support us through it all. Lord Jesus, you alone are the Saviour of the World. Help, strengthen and protect us from danger as we seek to serve you, one another and the community that we may be ready to risk all in order to save others. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Who gave His own life that we may live forever with You. Amen.”

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER