

Lesson 7: “The Light of Love”**1 John 2:7-11****Craig Crawshaw**

John, having challenged us to “keep His commandments” as a test of our faith in 1 John 2:3, now moves to the specific command of loving one another. And I believe John considered this love of one another to be the core essence of our Christian behavior – the ultimate behavioral test of authentic Christianity.

1 John 2:7-11 *Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

As we begin our consideration of this passage, I want you to note 12 specific times this command to “love one another” is given in the New Testament, leaving no doubt as to the critical importance God places on this behavior in His children.

A DOZEN NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

John 15:12 *This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*

John 15:17 *This I command you, that you love one another.*

Romans 13:8 *Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.*

1 Thessalonians 4:9 *Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.*

1 Peter 1:22 *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,*

1 John 3:11 *For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

1 John 3:23 *This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.*

1 John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*

1 John 4:11 *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

1 John 4:12 *No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.*

2 John 1:5 *Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.*

And God would say, “Do you hear me loud and clear? Have you got it?”

THIS COMMAND IS “OLD”

√ Old, in that it is implied as far back as Cain killing his brother Abel, and God asking Cain, “Where is your brother?” and Cain responding, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

√ Old, in that it was taught by Moses in the Law, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18)

√ Old, in the main sense that all believers hear this from the earliest of their Christian experience (“which you have had from the beginning”). Truly, all children are taught to “be nice to others” from their childhood.

THIS COMMAND IS “NEW” (for this I borrow from John Stott’s astute observations)

√ **In emphasis** – Jesus declared the whole of the Scripture could be summarized in the two greatest commands: to love God and to love your neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40)

√ **In quality** – Jesus said to love “as I have loved you,” implying self-sacrifice even unto death (John 13:34)

✓ **In extent** – In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus urged love to our “neighbor,” meaning anyone needing our compassion and help, including our enemy (Luke 10)

✓ **In fresh apprehension** – as we individually practice God’s love in our personal walk day by day, we find His command to love new in every fresh expression of His love

John says this love is evident both “in Him” – as he is the source, and “in you” as you are the reflection (v. 8). It is “evident” because the “darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.” Darkness dissipates as the light shines brighter. And so it is that hate dissipates as love shines brighter. Note that John is equating the metaphor of “Light” with the reality of “love.”

Note too this extremely important Divine observation of the course of history: “the darkness is passing away.” We tend to observe our world getting more dark and distant from God, which it is from our perspective. But from God’s Divine perspective “the darkness is passing away.” He is winning! The devil is losing! The goodness and love of God is winning over the evil and hatred of Satan. And it is “His Light” and your light that is making the difference. As Paul said to the Romans:

Romans 13:12 *The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

JOHN’S THIRD TEST OF OUR FAITH

Now in verse 9 we move to this third test of our faith. The first two, you will remember, were (1) obey my commandments - v. 9, and (2) abide in Me, walking as Jesus walked – v. 6. Now this third test begins as did the other two with “the one who says...,” followed by some description of being a believer in Christ. This time it is, “The one who says he is in the Light” (that is, says he is a Christian) “and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now” (that is, is not really a Christian). This is the negative statement, whereas the positive statement follows in verse 10: “the one who loves his brother abides in the Light.”

Therefore, to be compelled by the love of God to love one’s neighbor, despite their being difficult to love, is an indication of our salvation. And negatively stated, to not be compelled to love our unlovely “neighbor” shows we are not yet saved. Here is John in stark black and white clarity of description. And he goes on in verse 11 to say even stronger that to not show love is be walking in darkness, blinded by that darkness. Those who don’t love the unlovely are “blinded” meaning they will find every excuse to show that it makes perfect sense not to love the unlovely. They become blind to the need to respond to the need – a scary and pitiful state.

Dearly beloved of God (to borrow John’s phrase), consider who it is that you find “unlovely” and difficult to love – whether it be believer or unbeliever. Are you moved to love this one?, sit next to him?, talk to him?, help meet his need?, and forgive him? – treating him with both common decency and uncommon grace?

My guess is that each of us can readily picture someone in our life who we find difficult to love with that kind of grace. It might be someone in your past. It might be someone in your own family. It might be someone in this church. You might not be willing to say that you “hate” this one, because you know you are not supposed to hate someone. Yet to avoid, to ignore, to wish never to talk to or interact with again, is a good practical definition of “hate.”

In our passage, John is starkly telling us that if we are not compelled by the Spirit to show God’s unconditional “agape” love to this one, we must question our salvation. For to be saved, or to “walk in His Light” is to show the supernatural grace of love to all. To make excuses for our lack of love is to be “in the darkness” and “blinded” as to God’s call to love. And it should help to remember that God does not call us to conjure up this love on our own, but to reflect His love, which the Spirit within us will give us if we let Him.

SOME REFLECTIONS BY PROMINENT COMMENTATORS

✓ **Oswald J. Smith** (Canadian pastor and author): “*The light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home.*”

✓ **D. L. Moody** (American evangelist and publisher): “A Christian is the world’s Bible — and some of them need revising. It is a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it. We are told to let our light

shine, and if it does we won't need to tell anybody it does. The light will be its own witness. Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining--they just shine."

✓ **Charles Spurgeon** (English Baptist preacher, considered by many as the greatest preacher of all time): *"The sermons most needed today are sermons in shoes."*

✓ **G. Campbell Morgan** (British evangelist, teacher and author): *"The church does the most for the world when the church is the least like the world."*

David Guzik (of Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara) suggests the following about God's love:

- ✓ Wide enough – to include every human
- ✓ Long enough – to last through eternity
- ✓ Deep enough – to reach the most guilty sinner
- ✓ High enough – to take us to heaven

Ray Steadman (long time pastor of the Peninsula Bible Church) suggests John helps us understand authentic Christianity, as opposed to a false caricature:

- ✓ Caricature: Christianity is primarily a religion concerned about the behavior of man
Authentic: Christianity is primary about relationship with God, from which correct behavior comes
- ✓ Caricature: Christianity's attitude toward life is essentially negative – what not to do
Authentic: Christianity is positive – discovering the secret of the fullest, freest, most satisfying life that could possibly be experienced
- ✓ Caricature: The facts upon which Christianity rests are legends with minimal or no support
Authentic: The history of Christianity can be tested by normal means of testing evidence, which form a solid ground of faith based on historical fact.
- ✓ Caricature: The goal of the Christian faith is to produce a heaven filled with starchy, stiff, hymn-singing saints
Authentic: The goal of the Christian faith is to produce love-filled homes right now, filled with strong, manly men and gracious, sweet-tempered women, and orderly, alert, admirable children, who live together facing the normal, usual problems of life with thoughtfulness and mutual dependence upon the activity of a living, loving God in their midst.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

May God's love in your heart shine so brightly as to light up your home with graciousness and peace.
May His love shine into every contact you make, affecting both your words and actions with respect and consideration for all.

May those whom you find difficult to love experience the light of God's love through you.

May God's love in you find you caring more about the needs of others than about your own needs.

May God's love in you cause you seek new ways to love those you love the most.

Prayer for Love for Others Dear heavenly Father, You desire all Your children to love others as Christ loved us, but my love is poor and weak and is far removed from all that You desire of me. Please fill me with the love of Christ that I may love others in the same way that Christ loved me – so that as Your love pours into my soul, I may be used as a conduit for Christ's love to stream out to others with whom I come into contact. Help me to shine Your love not only to those that are lovable, but also to those who criticize me unfairly, ignore me or lash out at me. May the light and love of Jesus be distributed to all with whom I come in contact. in the name of He was and is the Light of the world and Incarnate Love, Amen