

2024-10-27 - In Action and In Truth - 1 John 3:11-24

Pastor Matt Johnson

Good morning. I was so caught up in the song I drank all my water. And then I was like, that's light right now. Praise the Lord for the worship this morning. Amen.

If you've got your Bibles, I want to invite you to open to First John Chapter 3. We're going to start in verse 11 today. And we are continuing our series on **“Life, Light, and Love.”** Today, we are going to start digging into Love.

In First John, the introduction is about Life, the Life that we're called to have with God, the eternal Life. And that is not eternal Life for when we die, but it's eternal Life for now and all eternity. The work of Christ is complete, even as in our lives, we're seeing it completed as we live. We have been saved by Him, and God sees us as His children even now. This Life means that we can have right fellowship with God today, even as we were designed and created to have it in the Garden of Eden. And that is a wonderful promise.

The whole book of First John is about how we live that fellowship out with other believers. For the last three weeks, we've talked about Light and walking in the Light because God is Light and in Him, there is no darkness. If we're going to walk in the Light, it means we must confess our darkness. We must confess our sin. We must walk forward together in the Light and dwell with the Lord. Remain with Him.

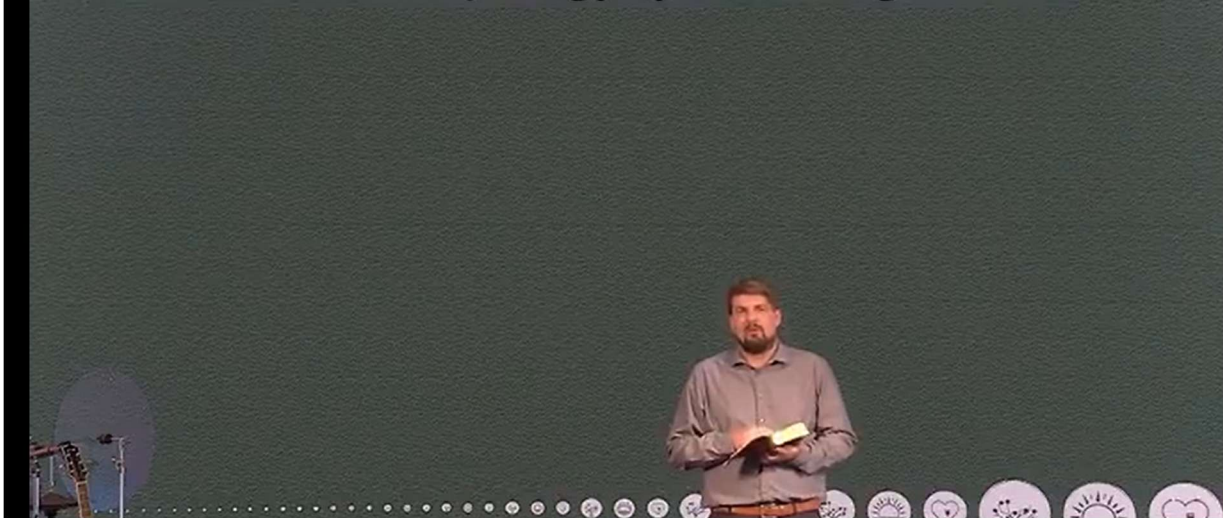
We talked last week about the thing that's going to leave us in the darkness is our pride, and we must be willing even to let that be aired out, that we would walk truly in the Light. Today, we're going to start talking about Love.

As we talk about Love today, I want to tell you it's going to take us a couple of weeks to come to a full definition of Love. Not because it's hard to define Love on biblical terms, but because today it is hard to define Love on biblical terms. When we hear the word Love, it means a whole lot of things in our modern culture. It is a word that is hard to define. It is very difficult to define, to the point that people will use it to say just about anything they want.

If we're going to talk about Love, there's something else we have to talk about. We've talked about Life, which when we talked about it, we talked about death. We've talked about Light, which meant we've talked about darkness. Today, as we talk about Love, we're going to work on defining hate in a biblical way because I don't know about you, but I feel like if I listen to the narrative of the world, being a Christian is about the most hateful thing you can be. Then I opened my Bible and said, well, that is not true.

If we are going to be people of the word and people who follow Jesus, people of Life, Light, and Love, we're going to need to be able to define these words on biblical terms to go into the world with confidence of who we actually are. The world is going to tell us we are a people of hate, and we should not be surprised by that, as we'll see in the passage today.

How do we become truly loving people in a world gone mad?



The question we are going to try and answer today is “**How do we become truly loving people in a world gone mad?**” The world has gone mad. It's funny because every four years when we're in an election season, it feels like it's gone more mad. Then I think and go, was it this bad four years ago? I don't think it was quite so bad.

I don't know about you. Twenty years ago for me, one of the biggest battles of being a Christian was you would talk to people about faith and they would say, "Well, hold on a second like that God guy. He hates LGBT people." There wasn't a “T” back then. He hates LGB people. You would say, "Well, it's a sin," and they would say, “They were born that way.”

Now, 20 years later. If you say, well, they were born that way, they say no, they get to define themselves however they want. We live in a world that has gone mad. Definitions change, everything is fluid. And somewhere in the middle of that, we need to cling to what the Bible says it means to be a people of love, and we need to understand how the Bible defines hate.

Because if we go out into the world and the world tells us we're hateful and we believe it, or shy away from walking in love, we are not following the Great Commission. We are not doing what we are called to do. Even more importantly, if we in this community allow the world's definitions to seep in, we will be an anemic body of Christ. Instead of one that follows the Lord with faith and conviction, walking into Life, Light, and Love of Jesus.

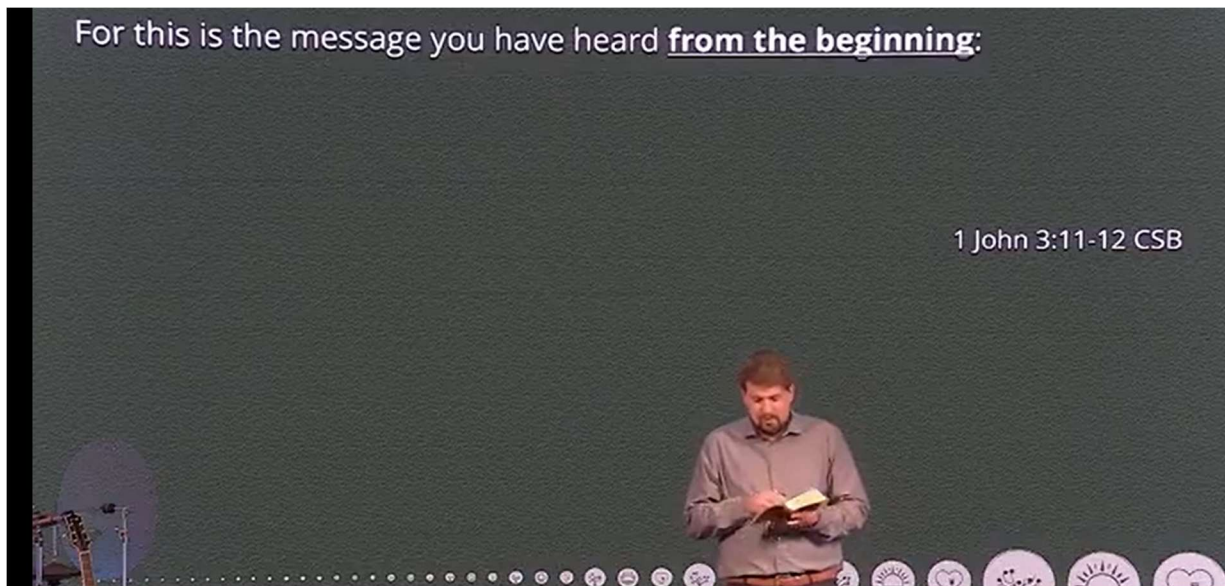
So I'm going to pray, and then we will jump in.

Father, we thank you. We thank you, Lord, that while we were still in darkness, while we did not even understand the truth of what Love was, you sent your son. This is how we have come to know Love, that he laid down his life for us. We pray, Lord, that the picture of Love that is shown on the cross and the picture of Love that is testified throughout all scripture, your great Love for us, would be the foundation for us of how we live together and how we live in this world.

We pray, Lord, when we feel the pressures of the world and the pressures of the Evil One and the pressures of darkness—darkness in the world and the darkness in our hearts—we struggle to

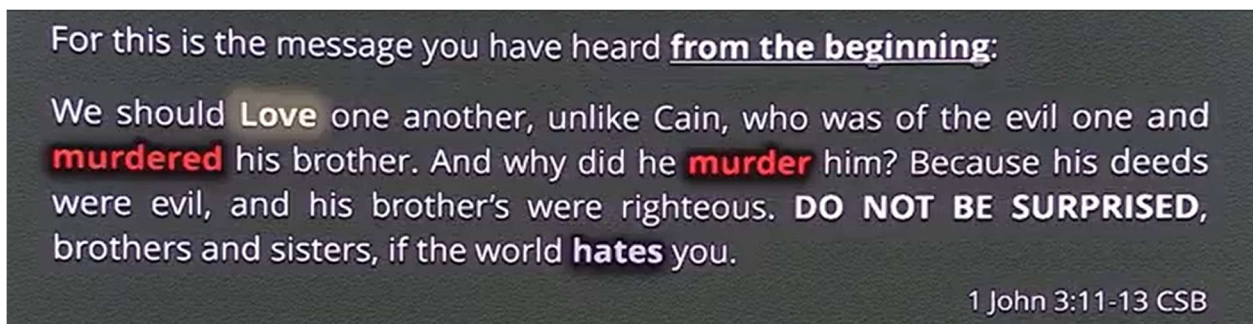
confess. We pray, Lord, that you would guide us, and your Spirit would be with us, and you would allow us to remain in you and with you. We pray, Lord, that as we dig deep today into what hate looks like in Scripture, that where we might harbor hate, Lord, you would help us repent of it. You would help us repent of it, knowing that when our hearts condemn us, we can turn to you and trust in you because you are greater than our hearts.

We pray, Lord, you would give us ears to hear and eyes to see what your word has to say. Father, I pray you would speak to me and speak through me. I pray that your name would be made great through the sermon and that you would be glorified. It's in your precious and holy name, we pray. Amen.



We're going to be in First John 3, and we're going to start in verse 11: "***For this is the message you have heard from the beginning.***"

I'm going to pause here before I say the message we have heard from the beginning because I want to tell you, when we see these words, we need to take these words back to Genesis 1:1—from the beginning, from the beginning of creation. Now God in three persons, the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, existed before creation. But the message we, as those made in God's image, the message for humanity from the beginning, was that we should Love one another.



When we were created in God's image in the garden, and we talked about this again and again, we were created to Love God and Love each other. When Jesus is asked, "What are the greatest

commandments? How do you summarize the law?" He replies, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself."

When you go to the garden, every action before the fall was an action of Love and worship as they enjoyed God's creation in right relationship with Him and each other. The picture of fellowship, naked and unashamed, is such a beautiful picture. That's what we are called to do, and it's what we have been called to do from the beginning.

But the first story we looked at last week, with the fall, the pride of humans, the rebellion of Adam and Eve. Eve sees desires and takes those who were made in the image of God. They were tempted, "You could be like God," even as they are made in His image, and they fall and fall and fall.

We should Love one another. Unlike Cain, who was of the Evil One and **murdered** his brother. And why did he **murder** him? Because his deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous. Cain killed Abel because his own deeds were evil, and he saw righteous deeds and the one who did them.

Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. Do not be surprised if the world hates you. It's a reality, and if we're following the truth of Scripture, the world is going to hate us. But what do we mean when we say hate?

Hate in Genesis 4:

Let's look at how hate is pictured in Genesis 4, in the story of Cain and Abel, by examining Cain's actions in light of Genesis 1 through Genesis 4.

Humans made in God's image, male and female, He created them. They're put in the garden to work it, to keep it, to be naked and unashamed before God and each other. And then the fall, the rebellion happens, and they're removed from the garden—Adam and Eve. In the very next story, we see how broken the world will be. It's not just Adam and Eve that are broken.

The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, "I have had a male child with the LORD's help." She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground.

Genesis 4:1-2 CSB

If you've got your Bibles open to Genesis 4, Genesis 4:1 begins: "***The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'I have had a male child with the Lord's help,' and she gave birth to his brother Abel.***" Now Abel became a shepherd of the flocks, but Cain worked the ground. Cain was a gardener.

In the course of time Cain presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.

Genesis 4:3-5 CSB

In the course of time, Cain presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the Lord, and Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious and looked despondent.

In Cain's reaction here, we see many problems, but those problems begin with his sacrifice. Cain gives a sacrifice that's just some of what he has. Abel gives the best of what he has; he gives of the firstborn of the flock and their fat portions. He is giving of the abundance he has, the best that he has. Cain just gives something. When the Lord has regard for Abel and has no regard for Cain, do you know what Cain could have done? He could have said, "I need to run back to my pantry and get out the better stuff." But he doesn't. In that moment, he's furious, and he looks despondent. He knows he hasn't given the best, and he is in fury because the Lord did not regard him.

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride

Hate in Genesis 4—the first thing we see is that [hate begins with unrestrained pride](#). What we're going to see as we look at the conversation with God and Cain is that Cain knows what he is supposed to do, and he is unwilling. His anger comes because God rightly judges him, and he says, "You can't judge me that way," in how he responds.

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent? If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Genesis 4:6-7 CSB

The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent?" Essentially, "Why are you reacting this way, Cain? *If you do what is right, won't you be accepted?*"

Now, sometimes people get to this and say, "Well, how is Cain supposed to know what type of offering? They don't have the law of Moses yet. How is Cain supposed to know?" But God here is telling him, "You know what is right." And if we trust God in his word, then Cain knows what he is supposed to do right now. *"If you do what is right, Cain, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."*

The Lord is saying to Cain, "You know what you are supposed to do here. You were made in my image. You were made to Love me and to love each other. And you are pretending like you're Loving me while giving me less than what you are called to. And here you are, angry about it, as I'm just telling you what you're truly doing."

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride

It thrives on disregarding our design

Hate begins with unrestrained pride, and it thrives on disregarding our design. We were made in God's image, in God's likeness, and here Cain is rejecting that picture. He is rejecting that God rules over him, and he is furious because he'd rather live in a different way than what he was created to live as. **Hate begins with unrestrained pride, and it thrives on disregarding our design.**

Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Genesis 4:8 CSB

Cain said to his brother Abel, instead of saying, "You know what, I need to go fix this," **Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.**

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride

It thrives on disregarding our design

It destroys the righteous

Hate destroys the righteous. The picture of hate we see in First John and from the beginning is that it leads to the destruction of the righteous. The pictures of hate we see in the world lead to the destruction of the righteous as well.

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

Genesis 4:9 CSB

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain responds, "I don't know. Am I my brother's guardian or keeper?" Cain here denies having any knowledge and denies any level of responsibility.

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride

It thrives on disregarding our design

It destroys the righteous

It radiates self-justification

Here we see another aspect of [hate—it radiates self-justification](#). What Cain has done is incredibly wicked, and when the Lord says, "Where's your brother?" it's another opportunity to repent. Instead, he said, "It's not up to me. I'm not my brother's keeper. It's not my problem." [Hate is so self-justifying; it radiates self-justification](#). He doesn't just say, "I don't know." He defends his not knowing.

Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed. If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

Genesis 4:10-12 CSB

Then God said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed. If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

But Cain answered the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me."

Genesis 4:13-14 CSB

The Lord tells Cain, "Here's your consequence," and here's how Cain responds: ***But Cain answered the Lord, "My punishment is too great to bear."*** I don't know how old Cain was, but I read this like a teenager saying, "That's not fair."

Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me." Cain, with his words, is not repenting. He's not saying, "Lord, forgive me, your punishment is just." He's saying, "It's too much." Yet he's killed his brother in hate.

Hate in Genesis 4:

- It begins with unrestrained pride
- It thrives on disregarding our design
- It destroys the righteous
- It radiates self-justification
- It refuses to repent

[Hate refuses to repent.](#) The picture here is so clear because over and over, Cain could have at any point said, "Lord, I've done wrong." It refuses to repent, and look where that leads.

Then the LORD replied to him, "In that case, whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." And he placed a mark on Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him. Then Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Genesis 4:15-16 CSB

Then the Lord replied, "In that case, whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over," and he placed a mark on Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him. Then Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Hate in Genesis 4:

- It begins with unrestrained pride
- It thrives on disregarding our design
- It destroys the righteous
- It radiates self-justification
- It refuses to repent
- It retreats from the Lord

Cain refuses to repent and moves further and further from the Lord's presence. [Hate retreats from the Lord.](#) [Hate begins with unrestrained pride.](#) [It thrives on disregarding our design.](#) [It destroys the righteous.](#) [It radiates self-justification,](#) [it refuses to repent,](#) and [it retreats from the Lord.](#)

Now ask yourself, when the world says Christianity is hateful, is this the picture of what we are called to be? Or what we are in Christ? No.

When we look at the world, what the world calls love is hate because it begins with unrestrained pride. Look at what is happening in the world and what we are called to do by the world's standard. The world says let people do whatever they want, let their truth stand, let whatever they want to do be whatever they do, let their identity be who they are. Let their truth be their truth. And that

unrestrained pride is at the heart of everything going on in our world. It thrives on disregarding our design.

I could talk here about LGBT. I could talk here about what we're seeing in just the election cycle. I could talk here about what we're seeing in family units. Jess and I watched a sitcom the other day where there was a guy that he and his wife were having trouble. The moment of peace and satisfaction in the show came when he realized it's time for us to get divorced, and it was celebrated on the show as look at the mature and loving thing he has done. I was thinking about what a sad reality that is. I feel like a gut check here of why? Why is this your presentation?

My kids probably won't notice that the same way because of how storytelling and narrative and media continue to shift things. That's why we protect our kids and what they watch, and I hope you do the same because the world doesn't just do this in loud ways. It does it in very quiet and subtle ways. If you spend time watching movies and TV, you'll see that the goal of all of it is self-actualization. If I realize this about myself, I will be satisfied. Then you see what's happening in our world of depression and anxiety and of people feeling like there's something wrong with them. They go to counseling, and not all counseling is bad. But in much of counseling, what you hear is, "You're good how you are, let's try and cope with the world around you." The reality is we, on our own, are trapped in darkness. There is nothing more hateful you can do than to tell someone they're OK as they are. Because we are not. If we were OK as we were, the cross would not be the story of the Bible. Jesus would not have had to come and die if we were OK as we were.

[Hate destroys the righteous](#) because if you try and speak out about love or God or anything, you are attacked or you feel attacked. I don't know about you, but I do. [Hate radiates self-justification](#) because the reality is when we start to bring an absolute truth and a picture of created design, people get so angry because they say, "You can't tell me who I am." One of the most infuriating things in the world is people who say, "Only God can judge me," who don't believe in God. What they're saying is there is no judgment, and they don't even see it because they're saying, "You're not a high enough power." But then when you say, "But there is a high enough power," they go, "No, there's not." [Hate radiates self-justification](#). It refuses to repent. And [it retreats from the Lord](#).

The world's picture of love will move us further and further away from the Lord. The world's picture of love refuses to repent because how could you ask someone to repent and change who they are? If we are going to navigate this world well, we need to see that what the world is saying is hate is love and what the world is saying is love is hate. There's nothing more loving you can do than to tell someone who is struggling that they are made in the image of God, that they have dignity and value, and that God loves them. That Jesus died for them. There's nothing more loving you can do than telling them that and helping them see there is such a thing as sin. There's righteousness, there's unrighteousness. It's wired into us. When we walk in hate, when we walk in darkness, we don't see it and we walk further and further away. The world does not even understand what love is.

We know that we have passed from death to life because we **love** our brothers and sisters. The one who does not **love** remains in death. Everyone who **hates** his brother or sister is a **murderer**, and you know that no **murderer** has eternal life residing in him.

1 John 3:14-15 CSB

I'm going to show you that as we keep going. Now we're back in First John. After verses 11 through 13, here's what it says: "***We know that we have passed from death to life. We were dead. Now we're alive. We were in darkness. Now we're in light. We were part of this world of hate. Now we're part of this world of love. We know we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.***"

Those who follow the world's picture of hate, or who follow the Bible's picture of hate, do not have life, do not have love, and do not have light.

This is how we have come to know **love**: He laid down his life for us.

1 John 3:16-18 CSB

This is how we know that we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. I want to pause here for a moment. When it says, "This is how we have come to know love," this is telling us that outside of Christ, how have we come to know love? He laid down his life for us. Outside of the picture of the love of Christ, no one knows love. We do not understand love outside of the work of Christ. This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us.

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride

Love in 1 John 3:11-24:

It is founded on the example of Christ

So in response to the world in its unrestrained pride and hate, Love in First John 3:11-24 is founded on the example of Christ. How have we come to know love? Christ first laid down his life for us. If you are here today, Christ laid down his life for you. If you are here today and you are a non-believer, I pray the Holy Spirit would just open your eyes to the reality of that. If you are a believer, I pray you would not settle for anything less than that type of love and that you would make sure that is the foundation of your picture of love. Christ laid down his life for us. It is founded on that example.

This is how we have come to know **love**: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:16-18 CSB

This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. We have come to know love because He has done it, and now we should do it for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Church, we should lay down our lives for one another again and again and again.

Husbands, in Ephesians 5, you are called to lay down your life for your wife as Christ laid down his life for the church. Husbands, that is your calling and your challenge in your marriage. Wives, you're called to submit to your husbands, and if you read that carefully and study deeply, submitting to your husbands means daily, but it also means you lay down your life back to them. If we want to be followers of Jesus, we are going to lay down our lives for one another again and again.

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride

It thrives on disregarding our design

Love in 1 John 3:11-24:

It is founded on the example of Christ

It sees the dignity of our design

This leads to the second point: Love is founded on the example of Christ and sees the dignity of our design. As we lay down our lives for one another, we are doing what Christ did for us. He restored us to walk in a right relationship with Him, to have fellowship with Him, to walk as we were created to walk. He who loved us so much laid down His life for us and asked us to do the same for one another—to see things the way He saw them and to love the way He loved.

This is how we have come to know **love**: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God's **love** reside in him? Little children, let us not **love** in word or speech, but in action and in truth.

1 John 3:16-18 CSB

We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. But how do we do this? Well, first off, there's the abstract idea of laying down your life, like pushing someone out of the way to get hit by a truck. That's one thing, but it's abstract, right? If we only look at it that way, we may say, "Well, I never had the chance." But look at what it says here: ***We should lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*** It says, ***"If anyone has the world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him, how does God's love reside in him?"*** Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.

The simple picture here is that the way we are called to love one another is to meet each other's needs with compassion in this life. It's not just the abstract future idea. When I was a young believer, I would always say, "I know I'd die for my faith if I was put in that situation." I hope you would say the same. But at the same time, will I live for it here and now? Will it be in action and truth or just abstract future? We are called to love in action and in truth.

Hate in Genesis 4:	Love in 1 John 3:11-24:
It begins with unrestrained pride	It is founded on the example of Christ
It thrives on disregarding our design	It sees the dignity of our design
It destroys the righteous	It leads to actively uplifting the righteous

Love in 1 John 3:11-24 is founded on the example of Christ. It sees the dignity of our design and [leads to actively uplifting the righteous](#). If we are loving one another well, we are going to be lifting each other up. When we gather as a body, we will be challenged, encouraged, and refreshed as we talk and seek the Lord together, as we love on one another.

This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things.

1 John 3:19-20 CSB

This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and will reassure our hearts before Him whenever our hearts condemn us, for God is greater than our hearts, and He knows all things. There is good news here. As we seek to follow Him, to walk with Him in truth and have reassurance, our hearts will condemn us. Sometimes it's hard to talk to believers, and I know I'm a pastor, so I'm not supposed to, but sometimes it's easy to feel less than love for other people. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. Unfortunately, I'm sure you can picture people or things where you're like, "That kind of drives me crazy about that person." There are times when we read this and see that if we don't love, if we harbor any hate, we're not from Christ. There are times where our hearts will condemn us.

The good news is that God is greater than your heart. God is greater than our hearts, and He knows all things. He knows that without His work, we don't even understand what love is outside of Christ first loving us. As we follow after Him, as we grow in our relationship with the Lord, as we learn to walk in the life, light, and love, when our hearts condemn us, when we don't measure up to what we are called to, just like how our salvation is not by our own hand, when our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and He knows all things.

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride
It thrives on disregarding our design
It destroys the righteous
It radiates self-justification

Love in 1 John 3:11-24:

It is founded on the example of Christ
It sees the dignity of our design
It leads to actively uplifting the righteous
It knows it is a work of God

Love knows it is a work of God. Love knows it is a work of God, because when we struggle, when we fall, when we fail to measure up, it should lead us back to God because He is greater than ourselves.

Dear friends, if our hearts don't condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive whatever we ask from him because we keep his commands and do what is pleasing in his sight.

1 John 3:21-22 CSB

Dear friends, if our hearts don't condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive whatever we ask from Him because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight.

Now, I know some of you might be thinking, "All right, Lord, I have confidence in you. My heart does not condemn me. Let the Bears win by sixty today." And we may think that's what this means when it says, "Receive whatever we ask from Him." But really, if our hearts don't condemn us, what we just saw when our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts. Dear friends, if our hearts don't condemn us because God is greater than our hearts, we have confidence before God and receive whatever we ask. If we are following Him faithfully, what we are going to be asking for is, "When our hearts condemn us, Lord, transform my heart." And we can ask that with confidence, and He will help, He will guide us, His Spirit will move in us, and He will transform us to look more and more like the image of His Son.

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride
It thrives on disregarding our design
It destroys the righteous
It radiates self-justification
It refuses to repent

Love in 1 John 3:11-24:

It is founded on the example of Christ
It sees the dignity of our design
It leads to actively uplifting the righteous
It knows it is a work of God
It readily repents

Love readily repents, and that's what this is about. When we have those moments where Cain said, "This is too much, I cannot bear it," and we know in our strength we cannot respond to this person, the Lord, when we cry out to Him, we know even when our hearts condemn us, it is a work of God. We know when we cry out to God, He and His love move us forward. We know we can readily repent

when we fall short because our hope doesn't rest on our ability to love but on the way He has loved us and keeps loving us.

Now this is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and **love** one another as he commanded us. The one who keeps his commands remains in him, and he in him. And the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he has given us.

1 John 3:23-24 CSB

Now this is His command: That we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commands remains in Him and He in him, and the way we know that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us. This is where we're going to end.

At the end of the story of Cain and Abel, Cain retreats from the Lord. We, as we follow the Lord in love, the way we know that we are in His love is that we have the Spirit He has given us. He is with us always.

Hate in Genesis 4:

It begins with unrestrained pride

It thrives on disregarding our design

It destroys the righteous

It radiates self-justification

It refuses to repent

It retreats from the Lord

Love in 1 John 3:11-24:

It is founded on the example of Christ

It sees the dignity of our design

It leads to actively uplifting the righteous

It knows it is a work of God

It readily repents

It leads to rest in the Lord

That **love will lead to rest in the Lord**. We won't have to flee from Him. We won't have to hide from Him. We won't have to walk in darkness. Because as He works in us and as He transforms us, we will more and more be able to **just rest in Him**.

As we come to the end of this picture, I hope you see how inverted the world's definitions are. It's amazing that people can look at Christianity and call it hateful, but it's because they do not understand love. The narratives the world has about the gospel are so unfounded, so untrue. We need to recognize that as we go out and not revert to the world's definitions. You're going to interact with people, if you're a believer, who think you're hateful. The worst thing you can do in that moment is retreat and fall back. Instead, we need to go into the world showing the love of Christ. Showing the love of Christ means we have to do it in a loving way. We're not out screaming to people about how bad they are; we're out showing people the love, light, and life of Christ.

How do we become truly loving people in a world gone mad?

Reject the lie that the Gospel is hateful...

The starting point of this is we are going to have to believe something: **How do we become truly loving people in a world gone mad? We need to reject the lie that the gospel is hateful.** Right now, you might think, "No doubt." But what about Tuesday afternoon when a coworker says something about the news, and people say, "Oh, those crazy... I can't believe they all think..." Do you retreat because you think that's valid? Or do you say, "Hold on, that narrative about who Jesus is, is not true. That narrative about the gospel, that's not true."

When your kids are struggling with these definitions—if your kids are on social media at all, parents, your kids shouldn't be on social media. It's not useful. All the data says it: half the depression and anxiety is because your kids are on social media. But let's live in reality: a lot of your kids are on social media. The algorithm, if they say they're Christian, is going to add things that are counter because what algorithms do is try to keep you connected. Studies find things that will make you angry will keep you engaged. Your children are being fed these different views and things all over the place. And by the way, I'm talking about your children, but you're doing it too. So am I. Click, click, click.

If we're going to live in this world and we are going to walk in this world and try to follow Jesus well, we need to start by **rejecting the lie that the gospel is hateful.** That needs to ride through everything we do in the world and, more importantly, in this community.

How do we become truly loving people in a world gone mad?

Reject the lie that the Gospel is hateful...

Resist the temptation to follow the world's definition of love...

That brings us to the next big idea: **We need to resist the temptation to follow the world's definition of love,** specifically in this community. If someone in this community comes to you and says they're struggling with something—and I hope you've gone and shared your struggles because the first four weeks were about confessing our struggles and walking in the light—we need to let other believers hear our struggles and speak into them. But the response in this community cannot be the world's definition of love and just saying, "Thanks for sharing." We need to be willing to call out sin to one another and help each other follow through on not following that sin. If someone's reached out to you and said, "Hey, I'm struggling with this," and you haven't responded and followed up, you're just letting it go. Don't be passive in your love for one another. We need to be intentional.

We need to resist the temptation to follow the world's definition of love. It's not enough to say, "Our gospel isn't a gospel of hate," if we're not going to live differently. If we say we have the truth, let's live that truth out. We love because Christ showed us what love was. He first loved us. Let's love the way He loved. Let's speak truth to each other the way He spoke truth.

How do we become truly loving people in a world gone mad?

Reject the lie that the Gospel is hateful...

Resist the temptation to follow the world's definition of **love**...

Remain in Christ, who created us to **love** from the beginning in fellowship with him



This brings us to the last idea: [How do we become truly loving people in a world gone mad? We have to reject the lie that the gospel is hateful. We have to resist the temptation to follow the world's definition of love. And we need to remain in Christ, who created us to love from the beginning, in fellowship with Him.](#)

The big idea today is: What do I take from this? Maybe it's, "I want to be a better husband. I want to be a better father." When I go out in the world, I want to represent Jesus better. Hopefully, a bunch of these hit: "I want to be a better wife, a better mother. I want to be a better child. I want to call my parents more this week because I haven't talked to them." I don't know for you, but think about what you're saying: "I want to love better in this way. When I come to small group this week, I want to love on my community."

For those of you that serve at things like Awana, I want to be a more loving person. But what I do know is that if your focus is on how you're going to do it and not on the Lord, you'll find yourself a week from now saying, "I didn't really live up to what I was called to live up to." The source of love and the way we love comes first from the way we love God and the way He loves us. The outpouring of that is how we love one another. If we're not going to start from that source, we'll find ourselves not loving one another because we'll be doing it in our strength, and it will fall short.

We have been given the Spirit. We have been given perfect love in Christ. He is the source of love for us, and if we are going to follow Him, we need to spend time in the Word. We need to spend time in prayer. We need to not go out and say, "Alright, God, I love you. Now I'm going to go figure it out on my own." No, we are going to seek Him out.

One of my favorite things from this week in my devotions was being in Psalm 23 and thinking about **"Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."** I'd never really thought about this before, but that staff had a little goad. Do you know what shepherds would do with that staff? They'd smack the sheep and hit them pretty hard to get them moving because sheep are not very smart animals.

And there's comfort in knowing the Lord is shaping and turning and moving us, more and more, into the people we were made to be. But we're not going to be those people if we think we lead ourselves. If we walk forward in our strength, we're going to turn around later and say, "Well, I could have done that a lot better," instead of seeing, "Wow, Lord, look at how you worked through me." That's what we're called to do: seek out the Lord, allowing the love He has for us and the love we have for Him to spread outward as we go. It starts in this community and goes out into the world as we do.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you. We thank you, Lord, that in a world that has gone mad, in a world that does not have a clear picture of love or hate, in a world that is full of sin and rebellion and pride, we thank you that you sent your Son. That He died on the cross for our sins, that He rose, that He ascended to heaven where He reigns and is returning. We thank you that through His work and through the work of your Holy Spirit, we have come to know you. Lord, I pray if anyone here does not know you, that even now you would be opening their eyes to your great love. And for those of us who do know you, Lord, I pray we would leave today believing the truth of your word over the lies of this world.

I pray, Lord, that we would not shy away from loving the way we are called to love and that we would not see ourselves as people of hate, but instead we would turn to you and your truth and walk in confidence. We praise you, Lord, that when our hearts condemn us, we know that you work in us and through us, and we pray that we would be a body helping one another to work through the sins that we have and helping us to leave them behind and walk forward truly and boldly.

We praise you, Lord, that your Son has shown us perfect love. We pray as we leave today that that would be the central thing on our hearts and in our minds, that we would trust in you, follow you faithfully, and recognize your great love for us. We pray that we would respond in kind to you and to one another. In your name, we pray. Amen.