

Community Group Discussion Questions

“Love One Another” – 1 John 3:11-18

Theme: *Is our profession of Christianity supported by the practice of genuine love?*

In these verses, the Apostle John is emphasizing a practical test by which we can know for certain that we are genuine Christians. This is his purpose in writing this letter (5:13). Woven throughout the letter are three such tests or evidences that will be present in our lives if our Christianity is the real deal: the moral test of *obedience*, the social test of *love* and the doctrinal test of *truth* concerning Jesus Christ. John applies each test three times throughout this letter. We're in the second round. He has already presented the obedience test; here he presents the love test.

John reminds us that the need to practice reciprocal love was part of the ethical instruction we received when we first became Christians (3:11). Like John's readers, we've heard this message of love many times before. Consequently, we may spend little or no time thinking about the implications of the mandate to love one another. To help us resist such a temptation, John emphasizes two powerful principles about love: its *evidence* (what it proves; 3:14-15) and its *essence* (what it is; 3:12-13, 16-18).

Gathering Together (Icebreaker)

What is one of the greatest acts of love someone has ever demonstrated toward you? What made it so special?

Growing Together (Truth/Equipping)

Read 1 John 3:11-18:

1. In your own words, what would you say is the main point of this passage?
2. John describes professing Christians who “hate” other Christians as “murderers.” According to verses 12-13, what is the difference between our loving someone and our hating them?
3. John's language here seems very clear. We either “love” other Christians by serving them or we “hate” them by ignoring them. It seems to be one or the other. Does this mean that any failure to love proves we're not truly Christians?

4. Is there a difference between our liking another Christian and our loving them? If so, is it possible to love certain believers without our liking them?
5. John's test is that genuine Christians will love one another (verses 11, 14, 16). Does this mean we do not have to love non-Christians? See also: Galatians 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Matthew 25:40.
6. John gives us an example to avoid: "*Do not be like Cain.*" Who was Cain? Why did he murder his brother? See Genesis 4:1-8; Hebrews 11:4.
7. If John's example to avoid is Cain, his example to follow is Christ. How does Jesus' death on the cross serve as the supreme example of love for us?

Getting Real with One Another (Accessibility)

1. Think of someone who may be hard for you to love right now. What can you do this week to demonstrate authentic love? See Matthew 5:43-48.
2. The VitalChurch Report revealed that we need to work on our love and acceptance of one another, especially those who have been here 5 years or less (newer attendees). Can you think of 2 or 3 practical ways we can strengthen our love for one another in our church? Consider sharing your ideas with one of our pastors or an elder.
3. Having considered some practical ways of expressing love to one another in the church, how can we as a church express love for those in our immediate community?
4. Conclude your time of discussion by reading 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Ask the Lord to help you to express these qualities in greater measure.

Group Prayer Time (Supplication)

In addition to the prayer concern expressed above (#4), pray also for those in our community and church who are dealing with difficulties right now. Pray also that the Lord will strengthen our love for one another.