

# *Love in Action*

## 1 John 3: Obeying in Love

### Lesson 3

1 John 3:1–24

#### *In a nutshell ~*

When was the last time that you remember pausing to think about God's great love for you? John is filled with wonder as he contemplates the love of God in making us His children. At the time this epistle was written, the church was being influenced by false teachers (Gnostics) who believed they could sin without consequence and their spirits remain untainted by evil. They claimed to know God but they hated their fellow believers who did not agree with them. John wrote to refute their openly sinful lifestyle and to assure all true believers that they must practice what is right if they claim to be Christian.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

#### **Read 1 John 3:1–24.**

The Greek word for *children* is a reference to spiritual birth. John is calling attention to the fact that God has *given birth* to believers—they are His own children. To be called *children of God* is not merely to assume a title; it is rather an absolute fact of life. In this chapter, John wants all believers to have confident assurance of their position in God's family.

1. Think about it: What does it mean to *you* to be a child of God?
  - a. How did you come to be His child? See John 1:9–12; John 3:3; and 1 Peter 1:23.
  - b. How does the “world” feel about the child of God? v. 1
2. The word “know” in vv.1–2 speaks of *acceptance*. John makes a similar statement about Jesus in John 1:10–11. What is his point?

The failure to recognize Jesus was due to the fact that people didn't accept Him for all that He is. Since the world rejects God, should we really be surprised when it also rejects us—His offspring?

3. As His child, what is God's ultimate goal for you? v. 2

a. How should this revelation affect your life while here on earth?

Do you have the hope John is talking about in his letter? Then for you, Christian, Heaven is not just a destination, it is a motivation to become *as Jesus is*! Since you enjoy the privilege of the family relationship with God, you must also bear the responsibility of exhibiting the character of God in your everyday life. The word *hope* (v. 3) means the confident expectation of future blessings. Since you have the hope of one day seeing Christ and becoming like Him, you must also desire to purify yourself from the presence of all sin in your life.

4. Look up the word *purify* (v. 3) and write a practical definition based upon its application to your life.

John uses the present tense in speaking of Jesus: "*He is pure*" (v. 3); "*He is righteous*" (v. 7). He remains these things today because He is eternal and He is opposed to sin and its devastating effect upon His children.

### *Selah ~*

The believer's position is that of a child of God—nothing less—period! But as His child, do you fully realize the meaning behind that great truth? The Apostle Paul stated that the moment we accept Jesus Christ as Savior, the veil of unbelief that previously blinded our hearts to the truth is lifted and taken away and we see Him for who He is (2 Corinthians 3:14–18). Paul also says that the process of transformation here on earth is a slow one and we will only fully comprehend once we reach Heaven. Take a moment to consider the following from your perspective . . .

a. Briefly relate when and how you met Jesus Christ for the very first time.

b. Since then, are you surprised when the "world" does not accept you for being a Christian?

- c. As Jesus continues to reveal Himself to you through His Word, do you continue to see more of Him manifested in your daily life? Give an example.
  
- d. Be encouraged Christian! John states that one day **you will be like Jesus!** Right now, as the Holy Spirit works in and through your life, would you say that you are working *with God* or *resisting Him*?

### *Key Verse* ~ (Memory verse) **1 John 3:18**

*"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."*

Review this verse often throughout the week. Write it out a couple of times in the space provided to help you commit it to memory. By week's end, try to notice *how* and *where* you are able to put it into practice. Note your results.

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Verses 4–10 are a challenge for the believer to interpret and make application in daily life. The Bible does not give one overall definition for sin, but here it states that *sin is lawlessness*. Scripture tells us that lawlessness is characteristic of the spirit of Antichrist: *"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and then man of lawlessness [sin] is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God . . ."* (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

5. Look up the following references that represent the various facets of sin and briefly note what you learn . . .

a. Proverbs 4:19

b. Romans 14:23b

c. James 4:17

d. 1 John 5:17a

The “man of lawlessness” does not reign in the believer’s life, but each child of God must deal with known sin the same way God dealt with it—by putting it to death!

*Up close ~*

Finish the sentences contained in the chart below to get a bigger picture of sin.

v. 4: *Whoever commits sin*

v. 4: *And sin is*

v. 5: *Christ was manifested*

v. 6: *The conclusion is*

v. 8: *He that commits sin*

v. 8: *The origin of sin is*

v. 8: *The Son of God was manifested*

v. 9: *The conclusion is*

John asserts (v. 9) that those who have been born into God’s family do not sin because God’s life (seed) is in them. They cannot keep on sinning because they have been born of God. John’s intent is to convey that the believer can no longer choose to *habitually*, or *continually* live in sin—they do not make a practice of it. They do not desire to live in that way; in fact, they renounce it because it is incompatible with their new nature in Christ. Sin is still active and, at times the believer will give in to it, but sin no longer has dominion or control, which is why the Christian is constantly fighting against it! In other words, your Christian walk is daily lived out on a spiritual battleground. The real question is: *who will win your heart today. . .tomorrow. . .next week?*

Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only thing that allowed God to forgive the sinner. It also provided the way for Christians to live without living in sin. He came literally to *destroy the works of the devil* (v. 8). The word “destroy” means to *diffuse*, or to *take the power out*. Satan is a defeated foe—meaning he can only have the victory if we let him! Remember that you as a Christian are fighting from the position of VICTORY—Jesus has already won! Will you take a moment to compose a prayer of thanks to Him?

## Love One Another

### **Read 1 John 3:10–24 for review.**

Once again, John points to the message of love, which is the prominent theme of his epistle: *“For this is the message you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another”* (v. 11). Before we ponder the significance of what love is, let’s look at what it is not.

1. Refer to vv. 11–13 along with Genesis 4:1–10 to answer the following:
  - a. Why did God accept Abel’s sacrifice and reject Cain’s?
  - b. How does the illustration of Cain’s resentment against Able compare with the world’s resentment of the believer?
  - c. Personal: Can you cite a recent example of a non-believer resenting you as a person of faith?
2. In verses 14–15, John repeats that it is impossible for love and hate to co-exist in the child of God. To what does John point as evidence of true faith?
  - a. How does John describe the one who hates his brother?

In the context of these verses, we can conclude that love is the outward manifestation that we have been saved and have passed from death into life.

3. Who is the believer’s supreme example of love? v. 16
  - a. John’s illustration of Jesus reveals that true love is sacrificial. In what ways should our love be expressed? What is the result when we do? vv. 17–19

When asked to lay one's life down for our brethren, we should be willing. The true test of being a Christian is our willingness to sacrifice on behalf of our brothers and sisters.

- b. Personal: Can you give a practical example of how you are expressing your love in action and in truth?

God knows that we love imperfectly and that we do not always rise to His standard. We may not be there for someone in need; we may not be willing to love that difficult individual in the body of Christ. We may even begin to listen to Satan's lies about us. If or when we do fall short, we have God's power and peace that keeps us secure in Him. And because He knows all things, He understands our desire to follow His example.

4. If your heart is right with God (1 John 1:9), what blessing is yours? v. 21

- a. With this confidence at hand, what can we do? v. 22 (See also John 15:12-16).

Warren Wiersbe says that conscience is the window of the heart that lets in God's truth. When we have confidence toward God, we also have freedom of speech in His presence, resulting in answered prayer and rest for our souls!

*Up close ~*

In verse 24, John speaks of the indwelling of Christ made possible by the Holy Spirit. John first heard Jesus speak of Him in the Upper Room Discourse (John 14). In these parting words, Jesus spoke of "another Comforter," the *Parakletos*—*One called alongside*. His Spirit makes it possible for us to know that He abides in us. What fact do you find about the Holy Spirit in John 14:17a, that is similar to John's words here in 3:1? Keep this in mind as you navigate through this temporal world with the Spirit's enabling.

Remember, if there is no sacrifice involved, it isn't Christian love. Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing! Individual acts of sacrificial love have transforming power, so don't ever minimize what you do for another in the name of the Lord. Jesus told His disciples that even a cup of cold water given in His name carries with it a reward!

# *Notes*