

1st John 3:16-24

16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us — and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. 17 How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? 18 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 19 And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him 20 whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; 22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us (NRSV).

The Bible is all about the conflict between good and evil. There is a constant battle between doing what is right and wrong, love and hatred, enhancing life and destroying life. The community of 1st John had split. Some members rejected the Son of God doctrine that embraces both the human and divine nature of Jesus. John emphasizes the humanity of Jesus, the significance of his death, the responsibility of followers to live as Jesus lived, and to love others as Jesus loves all of us.

The clearest sign of sin is lack of love. The lack of care for the well being of the other person in your community comes from a care only for the self. Love is the essential quality of life given to us by God and manifested in Jesus. We are to live as Jesus lived and to love as Jesus loved. The greatest commandments deal with love. Love God completely and love others as yourself. It is through love that God is known. God's love is revealed through the Son. The love of God is so important that it is manifested among us as God sent the Son into world so that we might live through him as children of God. This is in direct contrast to the children of the devil.

When the Lord commands us to love one another, the commandment, like all the other commandments, is not optional. It is not just love for the people in this room, your family, and friends. The commanded to love is to love like Jesus loves. That means we are to love people that aren't so easy to love. It is a matter of keeping the commandment, and holding to the faith of the gospel of love in its full sense. It is the Son of God that issues the command to love one another. It is the obedient that abide in him. The Lord's love is absolute. It is the ultimate love that is willing to lay down his own life for others. Jesus denied himself, not for a cause, but for us. Our response to love is love. It is not an obligation, or something we should do, it is a reciprocal response.

About age of five, there I was lost. I asked mama and other adults around me about Jesus, God, and heaven, and they couldn't explain in a way that a five year old could understand. I was looking for Jesus. In my teenage years I was lost again. Found friends and a supportive peer group in Sunday school and youth meetings. Mid twenties began to read Bible again. It was on and off, hot and cold for most of my life until I became a Disciple. As I was looking for Jesus I noticed that he was in the history books and that his presence on this earth had such a great impact that the calendar is based on

his appearance. I found Jesus to be the most interesting person ever. The more I study him, the more interesting he becomes. The greatest man ever is the man of love.

The more we desire to know about Jesus the more blessed we will be. The blessings come to us spiritually. Humans can change the imagery of how they see themselves and their environment. When it comes to the extent of our transgressions, we can deny wrongdoing. God knows everything and is in position to render a valid judgment. We all know that we are required to keep the commandments but all of the commandments are supported by the primary commandment of love. We are encouraged to imitate Jesus and love others as commanded by Jesus. As children of God, our first concern is God's pleasure. What brings any parent the greatest pleasure is a happy family full of love.