1 John 3:19-24 | Sunday March 8, 2026

Love can seem like such a simple topic and one that everyone can agree with. We hear so much in the world today about the need for everyone to show more love. The problem is the love the world calls us to is never defined. God's truth, on the other hand, is very clear in defining love. Jesus was willing to lay down His entire life for us, and we are called to reflect this same love. It is a love that is willing to sacrifice self and is based on God's truth. When love is defined this way, it is no longer a simple topic, and the world cannot agree with it. When we, as believers, see God call for us to be self-sacrificially loving to each other in the body of Christ, we can feel tremendously inadequate. Nothing is more convicting and exposes our failures than God's call to love. Through this passage we can be so tempted to condemn ourselves. **We start to wonder if it is even possible for us to show this kind of love**. Guilt can set in quickly. **God knew this about us.** In this next section, He offers us truth that is meant to anchor us to Him and give us a way to process our self-condemnation.

1 John 3:11; 14; 16-24 ESV

> (11) **For this is the message** that you have heard from the beginning**, that we should love one another.**
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> (14) **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers**. Whoever does not love abides in death.
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> (16) **By this we know love**, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.
> (17) But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?
> (18) Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.
> (19) **By this we shall know** that **we are of the truth** and **reassure our heart** before Him;
> (20) for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything.
> (21) Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;
> (22) and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him.
> (23) And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us.
> (24) Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

The love described is only possible through a relationship with Jesus. His life shows us what true love is. We can only have this love through an abiding relationship with Him. **This is why we can know so much from the love that He alone can produce in us.** When we see this God-produced love in us, it is meant to reassure our hearts that we are in the truth.

When we see this **God-produced love** in our life, we can know that we are walking in the truth, that we are abiding. The more we abide with Jesus, the more His love will shine through us. Seeing His love in us is meant to reassure our hearts. This word means to **convince, persuade, pacify, set at ease, to be won over as the result of persuasion.** Meaning God's love shown in us is meant to be something that we can point to **and convince our heart, and win it over, that we**

are abiding in Jesus. We can be so prone to doubt and guilt that we can wonder if we ever can really know if we are abiding. His love in us is meant to answer that question. It is meant to answer the doubts of our hearts.

1 John 3:19-20 ESV

> (19) **By this we shall know** that **we are of the truth** and **reassure our heart** before Him;
> (20) for **whenever our heart condemns us**, God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything.

We need this reassurance because **our hearts condemn and pronounce unfavorable judgment against us.** This is why it is so dangerous to live based on emotions. **This is why we cannot let our conscience be our guide**.

Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 ESV

> (12) There is a way that **seems right to a man**, **but its end is the way to death**.

There is a way that can appear right to us naturally. This can involve our actions or how to make decisions. It can also involve how we think and evaluate ourselves. It seems right to us that something would work this way or that. It seems right to us that when we sin, God is out to get us. It seems right that God couldn't love me because of this sin. **It seems right…** The end result of this natural thinking of our heart is death. God is so clear on this point that He repeats the same truth word for word, 2 chapters away from each other. Paul had to learn not to trust His **conscience** and not to judge himself.

1 Corinthians 4:3-4 NLT

> (3) As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. **I don't even trust my own judgment on this point.**
> (4) **My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right**. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

Through a lot of life, Paul had learned not to trust himself, not to trust the way that seemed right. In this case, his **conscience was clear, but he didn't trust it. On the other hand, if his conscience was condemning him, he didn't trust it then either.** We need to rely on God's truth in His word to reassure ourselves of the truth.

1 John 3:20 ESV

> (20) for whenever our heart condemns us, **God is greater than our heart**, and He knows everything.

This is a tremendous truth that we can come back to over and over again. God is greater than our hearts. When our hearts condemn us and feed us lies, God is greater! **He is greater because He knows our hearts and what is in them.**

Jeremiah 17:5-10 ESV

> (5) Thus says the LORD: "**Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength**, whose heart turns away from the LORD.
> (6) **He is like a shrub in the desert**, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.
> (7) "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, **whose trust is the LORD.**
> (8) He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream**, and does not**

> **fear when heat comes,** for its leaves remain green, and **is not anxious** in the year of drought, **for it does not cease to bear fruit."**
> (9) **The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?**
> (10) "**I the LORD search the heart** and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

It is a cursed thing to trust in our flesh and in ourselves. When we rely on our own strength, we are a shrub that is constantly dry. **We exist in a constant fear and anxiety of what might come next and if we will be strong enough to handle it**. This is what makes "what ifs" so hard. When we imagine scenarios, we leave God out of the picture. Instead, we are to be planted in Him and His Word. **When we rely on God, we have no need to fear or be anxious because we know who He is.** This is what abiding looks like; this person is bearing fruit as they rest in Him, fully aware they have no strength themselves. **This plant is not stronger, but they are tapped into God's strength.** Our hearts are deceitful and desperately sick. They keep trying to convince us to be a strong shrub in the desert. God is the one who searches our heart. He knows who we are and how we fully need Him. Solomon echoed this truth in his prayer as the temple was dedicated.

1 Kings 8:38-39 ESV

> (38) whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all Your people Israel, **each knowing the affliction of his own heart** and stretching out his hands toward this house,
> (39) then hear in heaven Your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each **whose heart You know**, according to all his ways (for You, **You only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind),**

We know the pain and affliction in our own heart, but we never know for sure if it is true or not by ourselves. Solomon prays for God to hear these prayers from heaven and to respond. God knows our hearts, and we are told **He alone knows what is truly in our hearts**. This means that we cannot claim full knowledge about our hearts; only He can. When our hearts condemn us, there can be so many truths that they fail to take into account. We question if we were truly loving or not, or if we should have done more, or if our motives were right. On and on the doubts can go. **God is greater than our hearts and takes into account all the things our hearts fail to.** God truly knows us and truly knows Himself!

Psalm 103:8-14 ESV

> (8) The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
> (9) He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger forever.
> (10) **He does not deal with us according to our sins**, nor repay us according to our iniquities.
> (11) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him;
> (12) as far as the east is from the west, **so far does He remove our transgressions from us.**
> (13) As a father shows compassion to His children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him.
> (14) **For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.**

God does not deal with us according to our sin. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are accepted in front of God. He is gracious, merciful, and abounding in steadfast love to us. **Jesus' life and death enable God to fully and completely remove our sin from us**. He fully knows our hearts and fully knows that we are just dust. **He was there and remembers that He created us from dirt (Gen 2:7).** When our hearts condemn us, we are to remember that there is nothing hidden from God. **There is no secret that can be revealed or action that we can do that will change His deep love and grace for us.** The truth that should convince and reassure our hearts is that **He fully knows us and still loves us and still produces His love in us!**

1 John 3:19-20 Wuest Expanded New Testament

> (19) In this we **shall know experientially** that we are out of the truth, and in His presence **shall tranquilize our hearts**
> (20) **in whatever our hearts condemn us**, because greater is God than our hearts and knows all things.

This is a truth that can tranquilize our self-condemning and lying hearts. We can often feel this way when we come to God in prayer. We need for our hearts to be reassured before Him when we come into His presence. God already knows!

1 John 3:21-22 ESV

> (21) Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, **we have confidence before God;**
> (22) and **whatever we ask we receive** from Him, because **we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him.**

This does not mean that our hearts never condemned us. We are able to have confidence before God **when we tranquilize our hearts with the truth that He already knows everything about us and still He loves us**. When we come back to this truth, we are able to have **openness, boldness, and free speech with God**. Why wouldn't we? He is greater than our hearts and knows them better than we do ourselves. We can be confident and open with God through Jesus' blood. This is the same word for confidence that John used back in 2:28 describing the boldness and free speech we are to have at Jesus return. An abiding walk is an open walk with Jesus. We should have this openness in our prayer life now and when He returns.

When we walk in this confidence before God, we can boldly come to Him in prayer and expect to receive whatever we ask of Him. This confidence comes from an abiding walk. **We can sometimes forget as believers the simple truth that God is pleased when we obey.** This means we are keeping God's commandments and pleasing Him so our prayers are reflecting His will.

Psalm 37:4-5 ESV

> (4) **Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.**
> (5) **Commit your way to the LORD**; trust in Him, and **He will act.**

We will have the desires of our heart, and God will give us what we ask of Him **when we first delight ourselves in Him**. Prayers that come out of an abiding walk, a walk that pleases God, reflect His character and heart. He can give us what we ask because **our desires are rooted in Him at that point.** The main way we can pray as **obedient Christians is for the will of God to be accomplished.** Jesus gave us this ultimate example. The prayer for God's will is a surrendering of ourselves and delighting in God. It is truly amazing how God summarizes what keeping His commandments truly looks like.

1 John 3:22-23 ESV

> (22) and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep **His commandments and do what pleases Him.**
> (23) And **this is His commandment, that we believe** in the name of His Son Jesus Christ **and love one another**, just as He has commanded us.

Notice the change from **plural commandments** in verse 22 to the **single commandment** in verse 23. The commandment that sums everything **up is to believe in the name of Jesus and to love one another.** To believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ is to trust and have faith in Jesus. To accept who He is as God's son and trust that He died on the cross for your sin. As we believe in Jesus and understand His love, we are able to have love for one another. **This singular commandment to believe and love sums up what an abiding walk looks like**. We are to grow deeper in our trust and walk with Him and, in turn, love others with the love He produces in us.

1 John 3:24 ESV

> (24) **Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God**, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, **by the Spirit whom He has given us**.

We are to reassure our condemning hearts by seeing the love God provides in us and trusting that He already knows everything about us. **We can know we are abiding in Him** when we are following His commandments. His commandment is to believe in Jesus and love. When we abide, we are walking in His light, in obedience. **We can know that God is abiding in us** because of the Holy Spirit. We go in and out of fellowship with Him, but God remains with us. He gave us His Spirit so we could know that He is abiding in us. We are the ones who pull back from the relationship. We are the ones who go back to the darkness. Thanks be to God that He remains faithful and never pulls back from us. He even sealed us with His Spirit to prove this to us.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NLT

> (21) **It is God who enables us**, along with you, **to stand firm for Christ**. He has commissioned us,
> (22) and He has identified us as His own by placing **the Holy Spirit** in our hearts **as the first installment that guarantees everything He has promised us.**
