

Small Group Guide

Based on 1 John 3:11-24 | "Love Matters"

Overview

This week's message walked us through 1 John 3:11-24, where John reminds the early church — and us — of the foundational command that has existed from the beginning: love one another. The sermon explored the contrast between two kingdoms, God as the supreme standard of love, and the fruit that grows in our lives when we genuinely live out that love through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Key Takeaways

- Love is not a suggestion — it is a command given by Jesus and rooted in the heart of God from the very beginning of Scripture.
- True love is defined by God, not by the world. It is sacrificial, obedient, and expressed in action, not just in words or feelings.
- The world will often respond to Christ-centered love with hostility, just as it responded to Jesus himself.
- The Holy Spirit is given to us as a gift to help us love the way God loves — convicting us when we fall short and transforming us as we draw near to him.
- When we are genuinely living for Christ, our prayers, our priorities, and the way we see people all begin to change.

Opening Question

Use this to help the group ease into conversation.

Think about a time when someone loved you in a way that genuinely surprised you or cost them something. What did that experience teach you about love?

Discussion Questions

1. John opens this section by saying the message to love one another is one the church has heard "from the beginning." Why do you think we need to be reminded of something so foundational so often? What tends to pull our attention away from it?

2. The sermon pointed out that God's character has not changed between the Old and New Testaments — the command to love God and love others runs through all of Scripture. How does understanding that consistency change the way you think about God?

3. Cain is used as a contrast to Abel — someone who followed the ways of the world rather than trusting God in faith and obedience. The sermon noted that Cain's anger at God and his brother reflects how the world often responds to those who live faithfully. Have you experienced pushback or hostility for living out your faith? How did you respond?

4. The sermon drew a distinction between churches and Christians who lean too heavily on truth without grace, and those who lean too heavily on grace without truth. Where do you personally tend to land? What does a healthy balance of both look like in everyday life?

5. 1 John 3:19-22 says that when we live in obedience and love, we have confidence before God and a clear conscience. What does it look like practically to live with that kind of peace? What tends to rob you of it?

6. The sermon challenged the idea that when God says we can "receive anything we ask," that means material comfort or ease. How does living close to God actually change what we pray for? What has your own prayer life revealed about where your heart is focused?

7. The pastor mentioned that if we are truly focused on Jesus and building a relationship with him, we do not need external reminders to tell us how to act — we begin to know because we know him. What does that kind of relationship with Jesus look like in your daily life right now? What is one area where you sense you need to grow closer to him?

Reflection Questions

These can be used for personal journaling or quiet reflection before or after your group meets.

- Am I loving the people around me in a way that costs me something, or is my love mostly convenient?
- When I look at the people in my life who do not yet know Jesus, do I see them the way God sees them? What would change if I did?
- Is there someone in my life I have been withholding love from — perhaps because they have hurt me, because they are difficult, or because I disagree with how they live? What is one step I could take toward them this week?
- Am I pursuing anything in the world — comfort, money, status, approval — that I have been hoping will give me the life and hope that only Christ can give?

Practical Applications

This week, choose at least one of the following to put into practice:

1. Identify one person and love them in action. Think of someone in your life — a neighbor, a coworker, a family member — who needs to experience love in a tangible way. Do not just tell them you care. Do something. Bring a meal, make a phone call, offer help, or simply show up.

2. Examine what you are pursuing. Take an honest look at where you are spending your time, money, and energy. Ask yourself whether those pursuits are pointing you and your family toward Christ or away from him. Make one adjustment this week that reflects a reordering of your priorities.

3. Pray differently. For one week, intentionally shift your prayers away from personal comfort and toward the people around you. Pray specifically for someone you know who does not yet know Jesus. Pray for your church to love well. Pray for your community and nation to turn toward God.

4. Spend time in the Gospels. The sermon encouraged us to read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to see how Jesus actually lived — how he treated the outcast, the proud, the lost, and his enemies. Pick one Gospel and read a chapter each day this week with the specific question in mind: How did Jesus love here, and what does that mean for how I live?

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying as a group. You may want to pray specifically for:

- Hearts that are willing to love sacrificially, even when it is difficult
- Eyes to see the people around you the way God sees them
- Anyone in the group who is still searching for the hope and life that only Christ offers
- The boldness to live and love in a way that looks different from the world

Next week we will continue our walk through 1 John. Consider reading 1 John 4 before your group meets.