

International Bible Lessons Commentary
1 John 3:11–24

New American Standard Bible

International Bible Lessons
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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, April 12, 2015**, is from **1 John 3:11-24**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the **[International Bible Lesson Forum](#)**.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

1 John 3:11–24

(1 John 3:11) For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

The Old and New Testaments include commands to love God and others (see Leviticus 19:18; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 6:5; Deuteronomy 7:9; Deuteronomy 10:19, *and* Matthew 5:43-44, Mark 12:30-31, and Luke 6:27). Jesus used the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate love for one's neighbors (see Luke 10:25-37). He commanded us to love our enemies and others as we love ourselves. Love includes doing what we wisely can to promote the well-being of others. Obeying the Great Commission is an example of this type of love for others (see Matthew 28:18-20). [*Note to teachers:* You may want to assign the above Scripture readings to members of your class to read aloud.]

(1 John 3:12) not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Christians are members of the family of God. Christians have been adopted into God's family through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior: "He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:5). The Son of God becomes the Elder brother of all who believe in and trust in Him, and they become brothers and sisters in Christ who should love everyone in the family of God: "For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not

ashamed to call them brothers and sisters” (Hebrews 2:11). True believers in Jesus Christ will not live like or practice sin as do those who are from the evil one, the devil. Jesus said the devil was the father of some people: “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Though Cain was physically Adam's son, spiritually Cain was a son of the devil. The details of Cain's murder of his brother Abel can be found in Genesis 4:1-15. John explained that “Cain's own deeds;” that is, “Cain's ways of living” were evil; therefore, he murdered Abel, whose ways of living were righteous. John warned those in the church not to adopt evil ways of living like Cain did.

(1 John 3:13) Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.

Though Jesus won the victory over the devil by His sinless life, death, and resurrection, the devil still has power in the world and Christians must resist the devil and his temptations: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). “The world” does not mean “God's creation,” but the spiritual resistance movement inspired by the devil against God and God's family. “The world” murdered Jesus, so God's family should not be surprised when those of “the world” hate

them and want to kill them too. “The world” hates the righteous way of living demonstrated by true Christians, just as Cain hated the righteous way of living demonstrated by Abel.

(1 John 3:14) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

We might ask, “Who loves those in God’s family?” Those who have passed from death to life; those who have entered God’s family through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ – they will love those in God’s family. They will seek to promote the true happiness and well-being of others in the family. If someone has not passed from spiritual death to spiritual life, they cannot and they will not love others, but they will remain in a state of opposition to God, to God’s ways, and to God’s people.

(1 John 3:15) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

To hate anyone, especially anyone in God’s family, is disobedient and unwise. Love for others does not mean accepting their unrighteous behavior as right, approving of their sins as though a life of sin is unimportant, or disregarding lifestyles that contradict the commands of God and the teachings of the Bible, for doing these things is both unloving and unwise. If we love someone who is

practicing sin and disobeying God, we will grieve for them, and we will do what we wisely can to help them as we see them continuing to turn from God to “the world” and to a different father, the devil. Sometimes we can only do the best thing possible and that is pray for them. To kill someone spiritually by leading them away from the will of God as revealed in the Bible is spiritual murder and an expression of hatred for God and those in God’s family. Jesus said, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5:20-22). “Eternal life” and Jesus who is “The Life” does not abide, live in, or remain in those who commit spiritual murder or physical murder. To abide in Christ, those who have committed spiritual or physical murder must repent of their sins and place their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

(1 John 3:16) We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Because Jesus loved those He came to save from sin and death, Jesus taught the truth in spite of opposition from “the world,” which included the devil and most of the religious and political leaders who met Jesus or heard about Jesus. In spite of all opposition, Jesus preached repentance and faith in himself as the Messiah and the Lord over all. He chose to lay down His life as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. We cannot atone for the sins of others, but we can follow the example of Jesus and love others and give our lives to helping others and especially to helping others find Jesus and His way.

(1 John 3:17) But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

John wrote his letter to the Church. Remembering Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan and remembering the Bible’s teachings about working and not being lazy, members of God’s family will want to help others in God’s family when they have the means to do what can be wisely done to help them (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Refusing to help someone in need in God’s family, when a person has the means, the opportunity, and the understanding of how best to help someone, may be a sign of lack of love and a sin.

(1 John 3:18) Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

God does not want Christians to simply say to some needy person, “God bless you,” when they have the means, the opportunity, and the wisdom to be the means of God blessing someone through them. Sometimes someone who is needy also needs to learn the truth about repentance and turning their life around to obey God by His grace through faith in Christ as Savior and Lord. Sometimes a person is needy in many ways because they are living contrary to the will of God as expressed in the Bible and the life of Jesus. Sometimes people need material assistance from “the world’s goods” that God has graciously placed in our possession so we can wisely and generously help others. We must always remember that many needs are not always the result of a person’s disobedience; the Book of Job provides a good example of a righteous man suffering. When Christians help others in need, God can be glorified (see John 9).

(1 John 3:19) We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him

John gives the members of God’s family some ways of knowing whether or not they are truly in God’s family as God’s obedient children. By self-examination we can reassure our hearts that God is truly our Father and not the devil. If we love other members of God’s family and do not try to physically or spiritually murder anyone as the world tries to do, and if we seek to help others in God’s family in the best ways that we can, we are from the truth,

and Jesus who is “The Truth” is the example we follow and trust. By living according to the example and teaching of Jesus, we can reassure our hearts before we come into the presence of God in prayer and before we meet God face to face.

(1 John 3:20) in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

Our hearts may unjustifiably condemn us and make us feel guilty when we have not done anything wrong or unwise; so, at times we especially need reassurance that we are from the truth and true children of God. God is greater than our hearts and He knows everything about us; God knows when we have acted righteously, whether we “feel” like we have acted right or not. God, through the Spirit and the Scriptures, can reassure us that we are members of His family. Our heart or our conscience or our sanctified reason (our mind committed to obeying and serving God our Father and Jesus Christ His Son) can also reveal to us whether or not we are doing what God wants as revealed in the Bible and in the opportunities we have to love and help others in the Church. God knows all about us, others, and every situation. His Spirit can reveal to us whether we are living within His will or not, for He is our Father and we are His children.

(1 John 3:21) Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

If our conscience, our reason, our heart, the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures do not show us that we are in the wrong or outside of the Father's will, then we can come into the presence of God (the Father and the Son) with boldness, and we can pray as the Holy Spirit leads and teaches us how to pray and for who and what we should pray.

(1 John 3:22) and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

God will not give us whatever we ask just because we say we believe in Jesus or are members of a church. If we obey God's commandments and do what pleases God as revealed in the Bible, then we can pray with boldness and whatever we ask will be Holy Spirit led and consistent with the revealed will of God and the will of God in our situation. For these reasons, God will give us whatever we ask, and we will ask for God's will to be done and done through us when possible to help and serve others.

(1 John 3:23) This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

God commands us to believe in His Son Jesus Christ and in the power of Christ's name as our Lord and Savior. God commands us to pray in the name of Jesus Christ with the commitment to live according to the will of Jesus Christ. When we do, we pray according to the will of God and we

love one another in truth and action with the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us. We disobey God when we think we only need to believe in Jesus and not love others. We also disobey God when we think we only need to love others and do not need to believe in Jesus as the Bible has revealed Jesus.

(1 John 3:24) The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

If we abide in Jesus Christ, we will obey His commandments; all of this will happen by the grace of God working in us as believers. Living in a state of persistent disobedience to God in Christ and the Scriptures indicates that we are not abiding in Christ or remaining within the will of Christ: Christ is not living in us, which is spiritual death and dying. If we are living contrary to the revealed will of God in the Scriptures without our heart condemning us or our reason telling us that we are living in the wrong way, then neither the Holy Spirit nor Jesus Christ are abiding in and with us; we are deceived and have a hardened heart. Jesus said that if we love Him we will obey His commandments: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments . . . They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them” (John 14:15, 21).

The Holy Spirit within those who believe in Christ will help them love and obey Jesus according to the Scriptures, and Jesus will abide in them. The Holy Spirit will use the Scriptures to give believers the assurance that Christ abides in them.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Where (or from whom) was Cain from and why did he murder his brother?
2. What should not surprise true Christians? Give a reason for your answer.
3. What aspect of our lives shows that we have passed from death to life?
4. What are some examples of Christian living that John gives believers?
5. Why can true Christians pray with boldness and receive from God whatever they ask?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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