



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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1 John 3:18-24 Commentary New International Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(1 John 3:18) Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in 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 their Savior and Lord. Sometimes a person is needy in many ways because they are living contrary to the revealed will of God as expressed in the Bible and the life of Jesus. But we need to pray for the right time and opportunity to share this truth with someone who is truly needy as well as a pray for the person and try to meet their other needs as best we can. 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 to reveal the greatness of his love for and loyalty to God. When Christians help others in need, God can be glorified, and they

can show forth their love for God and their love for others as Jesus commanded. [See the Gospel of John, chapter 9, where Jesus gave physical and spiritual sight to a man born blind. Jesus' physical help led to the man receiving his spiritual sight (salvation) afterward.]

(1 John 3:19) This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence:

John gives the members of God's family some ways of knowing whether they are truly living in God's family as God's obedient children or not. By self-examination we can reassure our hearts that God is truly our Father and not the devil, for we are living to please our Father. If we love other members of God's family, our neighbors, and our enemies as Jesus did, and if do not try to murder physically or spiritually anyone in ways the world tries to do, and if we seek to help others in the best ways that we can, we know we are from the truth. We can know that we have made Jesus who is "The Truth" our example to follow and we can know that we have trusted the Holy Spirit who leads us. By living according to the example and teaching of Jesus and by obeying His commands, we can reassure our hearts before we come into the presence of God in prayer and before we meet God face to face in the future according to His promises. If we obey Jesus' commands and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit daily according to the Bible, we will know that we are from the truth. If we follow Jesus daily and do what is right, our hearts (our conscience) will affirm to us that we have taken the right and wisest actions we knew to take under the circumstances. Our right behavior will show to God, to others, and to us that we are in a right relationship with God. Our heart will reassure us.

(1 John 3:20) If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

As followers of Jesus, if we do wrong, our heart (our conscience) will condemn us. Our heart will tell us the truthful action we knew to do but did not do. As followers of Jesus, we also know that God knows everything, and God knows what we did or did not do and the condition of our heart. Our hearts may sometimes be mistaken and unjustifiably condemn us and make us feel guilty when we have not done anything wrong or unwise; so, at times

such as these we especially need reassurance from God 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 and have sought to obey Him, whether we “feel” like we have acted right or not. We can seek God’s help, and through the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, God can reassure us and our heart that we are members of His family and tried to do our best. 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 we are doing what God wants as revealed in the Bible and through the opportunities that God gives us to love and help others in the Church and in the world. 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. If we do make an error in judgment, it is always best to have made an error while taking the most loving, helpful, and wisest actions we knew to take. With the help of God, we can live in or return to a right relationship with God where our hearts will not condemn us. God can reassure us that no matter what our heart mistakenly says, we tried to follow Jesus and the Holy Spirit and do what was right.

(1 John 3:21) Dear friends, if our hearts do 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 living wrong or living 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. Without demanding anything of God and while totally submissive and committed to doing God’s will and seeing God’s will done by, in, and through us, we can boldly ask God to help us and others in any situation. We can always boldly pray as the Lord’s Prayer has taught us, saying, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.

Amen.” (see Matthew 6:9-13).

(1 John 3:22) and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

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 and wise to help and serve others. Perhaps more importantly or as importantly, those who follow Jesus can pray for Jesus to show them what God’s will is and what Jesus wants them to ask Him for in prayer, and then pray boldly. Through the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, Jesus can show a believer what He wants them to ask for in prayer. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:26, “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.” When we do not know how to pray as we ought, we can always ask the Holy Spirit to guide our prayer. Furthermore, if we obey His commands, we will never ask God to do anything or help us do anything that is contrary to the revealed commands of God in the Bible, and we will want what we ask of God to please God. As followers of Jesus, as good examples for us, we can consider some of Paul’s prayers. In 2 Corinthians 13:7, Paul wrote, “We pray to God that you may not do anything wrong,” such a prayer will please God. In Ephesians 1:17, Paul wrote, “I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.” We can pray that prayer of Paul’s for ourselves and others. You may want to study all the prayers of Paul, but one last prayer for us to consider as we pray to better share the gospel and teach the Bible is in Ephesians 3:18-19, “I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints,

what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” As believers in Jesus, we surely need to learn and pray that we will “know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge”! You might pray the above prayer and change “you” to “I”—know with assurance that you will receive what you ask!

(1 John 3:23) And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another 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 and commandments 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 to be right with God and right within ourselves. 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. No one can love wisely and without self-centeredness apart from the love of Jesus within them and guiding them.

(1 John 3:24) The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

If we abide in Jesus Christ, we will obey His commandments—all of our obedience will happen by the grace of God working in us as believers in Jesus. We will probably not always obey Jesus perfectly in this world, but our problem will not be lack of God’s grace. As followers of Jesus, our loving Jesus and obeying Jesus will be our ultimate intention and habitual way of life—God knows our intentions. Living in a state of persistent disobedience to God in Christ and the Scriptures will indicate 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 we are living far from God—we are deceived and have hardened our heart against God and doing God’s will. 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 Jesus 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 and show them how best to love God and others.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What did John mean when he distinguished between not loving in word and speech but loving in truth and action.
2. From what you know about the teachings in John’s letter so far or other parts of the Bible, what is one way you can love in truth?
3. From what you know about the teachings in John’s letter so far or other parts of the Bible, what is one way you can love in action?
4. How can a follower of Jesus know that they are from the truth?
5. What must you do to receive whatever you want from God?

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