

Love finds its way into various vocabularies expressing a desire to enjoy a variety of experiences. Late in the first century, John wrote to encourage his readers to walk their talk. We notice the way the writer presented Jesus as the ultimate example of love.

*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

*1 John 3:16-18*

If Jesus has changed our hearts, we should see evidence of his way of loving in the way we relate to one another.

### 1. Get Involved

*16 ...we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

Getting involved requires more than mouthing words, "I Love You." If we are going to use the love word, we need to try to understand one another. Loving people make themselves and their resources available to express love in the presence of genuine need. Anyone can love in the abstract but loving in the concrete demands effort.

*Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?*

*James 2:15, 16*

*Love* is an action word. Love takes the initiative to help others become what they are meant to be *in Christ*. *Love* is a sacrificial word. Self-sacrifice always costs the person making the sacrifice. However, the sacrificial spirit chooses to sacrifice without calling attention to the price of the sacrifice.

### 2. Give Your Words Meaning

*18 ...let us not love with words or tongue*

The tongue can be the opposite of truth, especially if love is limited to words. The life of our Savior reveals a key to loving God's way. God's love rises out of the character of the lover, not the character or actions of the one loved.

Are you going to allow Jesus to create his loving character in you?

Jesus gave real life examples for showing God's love in *Matthew 5:39-42*. Loving people do not return ugliness for ugliness. Loving people share what they have. And loving people do more than is demanded of them.

Recognizing the depth of the needs around him in the fourth century, Basil said, "The bread you possess belongs to the hungry. The clothes you store in boxes, belong to the naked. The shoes rotting by you, belong to the barefoot. The money you hide belongs to anyone in need."

Do we dare share?

### 3. Grasp the Way of Christ

*18 ...let us ...love...with actions and in truth*

Many Christians memorized *John 3:16* but are unaware that John wrote another *3:16*. *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.* *1 John 3:16*

Kierkegaard: I do not know the truth except when it becomes part of me.

Our actions reveal the depth of the truth of God's love in our lives.

When *16 Jesus Christ laid down his life for us*, he gave himself away to address our needs and the needs of others. If we are to imitate Jesus, we must continue to address the needs of others in his name. God's *love* speaks through the way we use our time, talents, possessions, attitudes and energy.

How are you laying down your life for others?

Love is an easy word to say. However, giving up our self-interests and serving one another is demanding. As you think on this text, take time to invite God to exercise his love through your life.

