

LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

STUDY ELEVEN

Love and Hate: Where Are You?

1 John 3:11–18

John doesn't write about something that will give us theories to work on and to talk about with our friends and fellow Christians. I just love that about John's message. It's not about having the best notes or fostering a deep theological discussion. In this passage, John writes about loving people in "deed and truth."

—Charles R. Swindoll

IN the quaint old English nursery rhyme, *Pussycat, Pussycat, Where Have You Been?* a cat goes to London to look at the Queen. But what catches the cat's eye? The palace halls gilded in gold? The ornate throne in the royal room? The bejeweled Queen in her fine gown and ruby-studded crown?

Nope! The cat who went to see royalty saw only a mouse under the Queen's chair! Cats are cats, after all, and chasing mice is what they do! This children's story about "cat nature" also reflects a truth about human nature:

What we are determines what we see, and what we see determines what we do.

In the gilded palace of creation, God He has made His glory known to all people. According to Paul, "Through everything God made, [people] can see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature" (Romans 1:20).

Sin diverts people's attention, however, just as the little mouse caught the eye of the cat. People chase after vanities because they let sin, not the wonders of God, direct their sight. But we aren't hopeless. Only the power of God can give us a new, Godward nature that produces a supernatural change in perspective and action.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Love and Hate: Where Are You?

1 John 3:11–18

In the passage of this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, John continued his contrast of those who truly follow Christ with those who don't. Those who don't follow Christ operate in their old, fallen nature which tempts them toward anger and hate. Jesus-followers, however, operate in their new, Christ-like nature, which produces generous, practical, contagious love.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin with a prayer of gratitude to God for giving you a new nature. Ask the Spirit to bless your study so that you can yield all the more to the power of the Spirit and not to the old, fleshly desires that reject God's good ways.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The aged apostle opened our passage of Scripture with a reminder of what he'd previously written:

This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. (1 John 3:11)

He then approached the meaning of this command from an angle different from the one he took earlier in the letter. *First John 2:7–11* reveals how the command to *love one another* is based on what God accomplished through Moses (*Leviticus 19:17–18*) and on the teaching and death of Jesus (*John 13:1–17, 31–38*).

Next, John aligned this old, yet new command with the new nature God gives believers. In doing so, John taught how this command practically expresses itself. Using the power of contrasts, John showed the difference between our old-nature-works and our new-nature-works.

To begin the contrast, John referenced an example from the biblical story of Cain and Abel.



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Correlation: The Tragic Story

Read the story of Cain and Abel in *Genesis 4:1–12*. Put yourself in their sandals. Feel the fur of Abel's lamb. Stand beside guilty Cain before God.

How did Cain respond to God's rejection of his offering (*Genesis 4:5*), and what warnings did God give Cain regarding Cain's feelings (*4:6–7*)?

How did Cain respond to God's warning? What does Cain's behavior demonstrate about his nature (*4:8*)?

What you are determines what you do. Cain was an evil man, and when you combine that evil spirit—that evil nature—with a mixture of envy and resentment . . . it will equal murder. —Chuck Swindoll

Bible interpreters have noted at least three reasons God rejected Cain:

- 1) *Cain performed evil deeds before his sacrifice.* That's why God told him, "You will be accepted if you do what is right" (*Genesis 4:7*; see also *1 John 3:12*).



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- 2) *Cain didn't offer blood with his sacrifice.* God's killing of animals to provide Adam and Eve with clothing should have served as Cain's example to follow (*Genesis 3:21*), but he refused God's prescribed method of sacrifice to worship God his *own way*. Therefore, God rejected him.
- 3) *Cain didn't offer his sacrifice in faith.* Cain ho-hummed his way through worship without seeing any real benefit in pleasing or obeying God. Abel trusted God as a God who rewards those who seek Him (*Hebrews 11:1–6*).

How are these reasons instructive for us today? Which one do you find most illuminating?

Now we turn to John's summary of the Cain and Abel story and the practical teaching he draws from it.



Observation: John's Shocking Contrasts

Observe *1 John 3:11–15*. In verses 11 and 13, what two instructive connections did John draw from the Cain and Abel story?

The world will hate you, Christian. Why? Because you do righteously, and the world doesn't. Cain hated Abel for doing what was righteous. That hate showed Cain to be unrighteous. Cain is the prototype of this world. And the world, as we read, "hates you." We must not be surprised. —Chuck Swindoll



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Look at *1 John 3:14–15* which mentions the principle referenced above: what you are determines what you see, and what you see determines what you do. How did John explain this principle? How did he distinguish humanity into two kinds of people?

John taught that conversion occurred in a moment (see John 3:1–15). At that moment, the Spirit, like a divine defibrillator, jolts us with divine electricity into new life. During a Christian's lifetime, this same current of life passes through us to others via our love for them. Some reject that current or even hate it. But others will be drawn to it and find life in the Son.



Interpretation: Genuine Examples from Genuine Followers

Now, John gets practical. He refused to let love remain only an idea. In *1 John 3:16–18*, John gave us an application principle and then exhorts us to apply that principle. First, read the passage a couple of times.

In *3:16*, what principle did John draw from Jesus' example?



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According to 1 John 3:17, how did John add flesh to the principle? List five concrete expressions of this principle in your life.



Chuck's Commentary Insight

First John Theme: Love

Unlike those who hate other believers and lack salvation, “we know that we have passed out of death into life” (1 Jn. 3:14). How do we know this? Because we love the brothers and sisters. John’s intention is that, as his readers consider the disposition and murderous actions of Cain, they will not see themselves as being like him. Just the opposite. Instead of behaving like Cain, who slew his brother to satiate his own anger, children of God ought to follow Christ’s extreme example of self-sacrificial love (3:16). Just as Christ laid down His life for us because of His love, we should love the brethren by laying down our lives for them.¹

How did John summarize the main point of 1 John 3:11–18 in 3:18?

John concerned himself with the proof of love in 1 John 3:16–18. Christ’s self-sacrificial death on a Roman cross proved His love for us. When our compassion for others translates into concrete acts of sacrificial giving, the world receives proof of our genuine love.



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Application: Live It Out

During application, we translate into action the new perspective we gained from God's Word.² Sometimes, this action develops new habits of thinking or speaking or acting. For this study, we focus on just one action to implement. Chuck Swindoll suggests you perform three steps over the course of the next week to help you incorporate this action.

One Person

Ask God to help you pick one person to whom you would like to demonstrate an act of love. You may choose one whom you think of often but don't have many opportunities to see. Or you might choose one you see often but neglect to show the love you have for him or her.

Name that person: _____

One Need

Pray for guidance and wisdom to discern a need that person has. Really think through the person's rhythm of life and what would make him or her feel loved.

Describe that need: _____

One Act

Determine one act of sacrificial giving you can perform to meet that need. Don't take the cheap and quick route. Surprise him or her with quality and sacrifice.

Select that act: _____

Choose when you want to act: _____

What a blessing you will be to that person! A simple act of love can create such a spiritual impact in a person's life. You may even wish to make it an anonymous surprise. If you do, have confidence that your Father who sees in secret will also reward in secret (Matthew 6:4).



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I stand in complete gratitude for the acts of love You display toward me. Thank You for my new nature, for giving me spiritual breath to breathe, and for animating me with a vibrant love that wells up into a spring of eternal life. Help me to live new. I want others to see Your power in me. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 93–94.
2. To review Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org. If you do not have the Swindoll's Living Insights commentary on 1 John in your library, *grab a copy* at the Insight for Living Ministries web store.

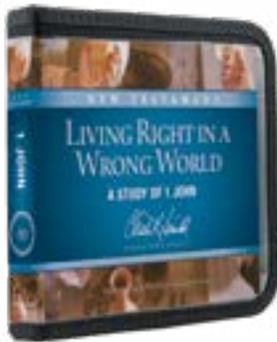


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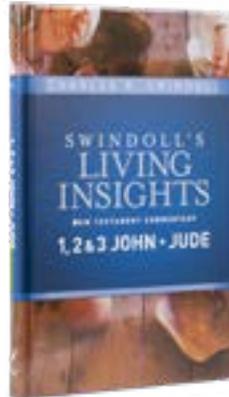
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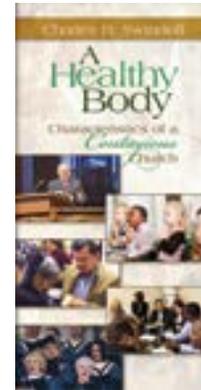
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

