

Series: "LOVE LETTER from JOHN"

For Message: 1 John 3:11-24

Message Title: "Love or Death"

Introduction: Welcome to BMZ CHURCH! Glad you're here as we CONTINUE our WORSHIP SERIES called: "**LOVE LETTER from JOHN**"! This is a SUMMER Bible Study to help us continue to GROW in our FAITH, so we are ENCOURAGED to SHARE it with OTHERS. When we are FOCUSED on God's WORD, we are LESS DISTRACTED by the THINK/GS of THIS WORLD.

John wants us to experience REAL LIFE, according to JESUS ... WHAT we are CREATED to EXPERIENCE! FELLOWSHIP with OTHERS, GOD, and JESUS. JOY may be FULL and OVERFLOWING. Meaningful and DEEP PURPOSE.

It has been said the FIRST LETTER from JOHN is like a SPIRAL STAIRCASE because it continually RETURNS to THREE TOPICS: LOVE, OBEDIENCE, and TRUTH. BUT here's the THING ... it is NOT just REPETITIOUS. Each time JOHN RETURNS to a TOPIC, he comes at it from a DIFFERENT ANGLE and goes a LITTLE DEEPER.

REMEMBER, John has SHIFTED from the 1st 2 CHAPTERS as OBEDIENT because we have FELLOWSHIP with The FATHER and The SON ... TO (Chapter 3) ... WE are OBEDIENT to the FATHER because we are BORN of GOD ... AS SONS and DAUGHTERS of THE FATHER, we are OBEDIENT to HIM (*1 John 3:1-10*). We want to be RIGHTEOUS / HOLY in OBEDIENCE to the ONE WHO LOVES US (God), The ONE who DIED for US (Jesus), and the ONE who LIVES IN US (Holy Spirit) ... LAST WEEK. Here's how we finished ... *1 JOHN 3:10 = So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.*

THIS WEEK, John moves FROM OBEDIENCE to LOVE. IN OBEDIENCE to GOD, we MUST LOVE OTHERS ("*Other Believers*" being the BARE MINIMUM) ... If you REMEMBER, JOHN WROTE of LOVING others in CHAPTER 2. He said that IN FELLOWSHIP with GOD, LOVING OTHERS is a MATTER of *LIGHT and DARKNESS*. You can NOT CLAIM to LIVE in the LIGHT IF you do NOT LOVE OTHERS. No matter HOW LOUDLY you PROCLAIM CHRIST, IF you do NOT LOVE, you LIVE in DARKNESS.

NOW, as those BORN of GOD, JOHN GOES DEEPER and writes that this LOVE THING is MATTER of *LIFE and DEATH*. Over the NEXT number of VERSES, JOHN writes of DIFFERENT LEVELS of RELATIONSHIP we can HAVE with OTHERS.

Four Possible Levels of Relationship:

Now, the FIRST TWO are NOT CHRISTIAN AT ALL. The THIRD is LESS than CHRIST-LIKE, and ONLY the LAST ONE is about CHRIST-LIKE LOVE ... Remember JESUS' COMMAND: "*Love One Another, as I have Loved You...*" (JOHN 13 – Upper Room - - and 15 ... Jesus REPEATED IT) ... *1 JOHN 3:11 = This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another.*

From the BEGINNING of CHRISTIANITY, the MESSAGE has been to LOVE ONE ANOTHER! GOD SHOWED LOVE to the HEBREW people / ISRAELITES. JESUS MODELED LOVE throughout His EARTHLY MINISTRY. WE should DO the SAME.

BUT John UNDERSTOOD that people RESPOND to OTHER people DIFFERENTLY. So ... FOUR POSSIBLE LEVELS of RELATIONSHIP. #1 ...

#1 = MURDER

This is the LOWEST LEVEL on which we can LIVE in RELATIONSHIP to SOMEONE ... it is SATANIC. It is the LEVEL of RELATIONSHIP with PEOPLE that SATAN LIVES ON ... HE is a MURDERER from the BEGINNING ... He came to STEAL, KILL, and DESTROY.

JOHN addresses this LOWEST LEVEL of RELATIONSHIP by going BACK to the BEGINNING ... 1 JOHN 3:12 = *We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous.*

Cain and Abel ... SONS of Adam and Eve ... Genesis 4. CAIN is an EXAMPLE of a LIFE of HATRED. NOTE: Cain and Abel were BROTHERS who BOTH brought SACRIFICES to GOD. Cain was NOT an ATHEIST; He was a WORSHIPPER. He was IN WORSHIP ... a CHILD of the DEVIL who OUTWARDLY LOOKED like a BELIEVER. BUT the Lord ACCEPTED ABEL'S SACRIFICE and did NOT ACCEPT CAIN'S. WHY? Because ABEL gave GOD the BEST of his FIRSTBORN LAMBS and CAIN held BACK the BEST of his CROPS for HIMSELF. God gave CAIN DIRECTION to DO what IS RIGHT ... GIVE your BEST from your HEART. CAIN REFUSED.

ABEL gave His BEST BACK to GOD ... CAIN was SELFISH ... Author of Hebrews recounts ... HEBREWS 11:4a = *It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts.* GOD gave CAIN a CHOICE to be SELFLESS before the ALMIGHTY or be SELFISH and MAKE HIMSELF his own god. RATHER than REPENT of his SELFISHNESS, he CHOSE to DESTROY his BROTHER.

About 50 YEARS before JOHN WRITES THIS LETTER, the PHARISEES did the SAME thing to JESUS ... they REFUSED to REPENT and KILLED HIM. Jesus called them too "*CHILDREN of the DEVIL.*"

CAIN'S ATTITUDE represents the ATTITUDE of our WORLD System. The WORLD HATES JESUS for the SAME REASON CAIN HATED ABEL. CAIN HATED ABEL because ABEL was RIGHT in GOD'S HEART (Holy / Righteous) and CAIN did NOT WANT to BE. GOD REVEALED CAIN'S SIN NATURE. In our WORLD, PEOPLE do NOT want to be HOLY / RIGHTEOUS, and they do NOT LIKE JESUS (or Jesus Followers) REVEALING their SIN NATURE. SO ... the WORLD HATES FOLLOWERS of JESUS.

Listen ... 1 JOHN 3:13 = *So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.* That gets us to the SECOND LEVEL of RELATIONSHIP with OTHERS ...

#2 = HATRED

HATRED, ALSO, is NOT CHRISTIAN LOVE. I know SOME of you are thinking, "*WELL, at LEAST I've NEVER KILLED ANYONE!*" Do you REMEMBER what JESUS said in the SERMON on the MOUNT (Matt 5:22)? He LIKENED HATRED to MURDER ... because THAT is what is IN your HEART. "*If you are ANGRY with SOMEONE, you are SUBJECT to JUDGEMENT.*"

John Continues ... 1 JOHN 3:14-15 = *If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. 15 Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.*

The QUESTION for JESUS is NOT so much, **“WHAT did you DO?”** as it is, **“WHAT did you WANT to DO?”** Like, WHAT would you have DONE if you did NOT have to FEAR any CONSEQUENCES? This is WHY JESUS EQUATES HATRED with MURDER and LUST with ADULTERY.

PAUL reminds us this HATRED THING is NOT of CHRIST but OF the WORLD and SATAN is the PRINCE of this WORLD ... **TITUS 3:3 = *Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.***

HATEFUL and ONGOING HATRED is the WAY an UNBELIEVER LIVES. Like LAST WEEK, it's about the PRACTICE of HATRED. A BELIEVER will OCCASIONALLY get ANGRY. WHAT WE'RE talking about is ALLOWING the HATRED to TAKE ROOT in our HEARTS ... we become HATEFUL in CHARACTER.

One more time, WE have a CHOICE! JOHN reminds us that our LOVE PROVES we have PASSED from DEATH to LIFE (John 5:24). We CHOOSE to be LOVING or HATEFUL. Those who SURRENDER to JESUS and HIS WAYS and BORN of GOD (Again / of The Spirit) wants to LOVE OTHERS and SHARE the MESSAGE of ETERNAL LIFE with them.

JOHN WESLEY was ROBBED one NIGHT on the ROAD. Wesley said to him, **“IF the DAY should COME that you DESIRE to LEAVE this EVIL WAY and LIVE for GOD, remember that The BLOOD of Jesus Christ CLEANSSES from ALL SIN.”** Wesley did NOT have HATRED. He just wanted HIM SAVED for ETERNITY (Real Life).

YEARS later WESLEY RECORDED in his JOURNAL that a MAN, AFTER SERVICE that EVENING, had ASKED if WESLEY REMEMBERED HIM. **“I ROBBED you one night, and you told me that the BLOOD of Jesus Christ CLEANSSES from ALL SIN. I have TRUSTED JESUS. He has CHANGED my LIFE.”** GOD can CHANGE US and OTHERS. And he wants to USE US to let OTHERS KNOW it's POSSIBLE! Eternal Life.

Then, the MOST DIFFICULT VERSE for US ... **1 JOHN 3:16 = *We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.*** The TEST of CHRISTIAN LOVE is NOT just to NOT DO EVIL to OTHERS ... it is ALSO to DO GOOD for THEM. The 3rd LEVEL of RELATIONSHIP is NOT QUITE Christ-Like EITHER ...

#3 = INDIFFERENCE

Like, it is NOT GOOD ENOUGH to NOT MURDER or HATE ... we MUST do MORE as FOLLOWERS of JESUS. Listen, MANY of us KNOW JOHN 3:16. BUT, do we KNOW and LIVE by **1 JOHN 3:16**? We SHOULD, according to JESUS! Are we WILLING to GIVE UP our LIVES for the NEEDS of OTHERS? (**“Brothers and Sisters”** is SIMPLY a LOWEST STANDARD ... we're ALSO to LOVE our NEIGHBORS / ENEMIES / those who CURSE US)

Christian LOVE LEADS with SACRIFICE and SERVICE. **“SELF-SACRIFICE”** is RULE #1 of our FAITH LIFE. JESUS set the EXAMPLE and WE are HIS FOLLOWERS.

Jesus LESSON of the GOOD SAMARITAN REMINDS us ... The QUESTION is NOT, **“WHO is MY NEIGHBOR?”** The QUESTION NEEDS to be: **“WHO CAN I BE a NEIGHBOR TO?”** JOHN writes the PARABLE of the GOOD Samaritan in ONE SENTENCE ...

1 JOHN 3:17 = *If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?* THREE CONDITIONS to HELPING a BROTHER/SISTER in NEED: 1) You MUST have the MEANS to HELP (might take some SACRIFICE). 2) You NEED to KNOW the NEED EXISTS (pay attention to where God places you). 3) I MUST BE LOVING ENOUGH TO WANT TO

SHARE WHAT I HAVE. This is NOT just MONEY. *UNLIKE the "TITHE"*, SERVING OTHERS can be TIME, ENERGY, PRESENCE, etc. ACCORDING to the NEED. Okay, we can't be COMPLACENT ... INDIFFERENT. It's NOT Christ-Like.

1 JOHN 3:18 = *Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.* 4th LEVEL of RELATIONSHIP to OTHERS ...

#4 = Christ-Like LOVE

Listen, WORDS and ACTIONS are OFTEN TWO DIFFERENT THINGS. Just SAYING it or TALKING ABOUT it AIN'T DOING IT! LOVE is a VERB. It is to be PUT into ACTION!

To SAY we LOVE someone CAN BE INSINCERE. When we LOVE someone in TRUTH by our ACTIONS ... that CAN NOT BE INSINCERE!

3 Blessings from Showing the Truth:

IF we are WILLING to SHOW the TRUTH by our ACTIONS ... the BLESSINGS of CHRIST FOLLOW ... 1 JOHN 3:19-20 = *Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. 20Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.* FIRST BLESSING is ...

Confidence The DAY is COMING when EACH of us will STAND BEFORE GOD and GIVE an ACCOUNT of what we've ... SAID? NOPE! What we've DONE! And JOHN reminds us that IF we LOVE OTHERS in TRUTH (LOVE in Action from a HEART for JESUS), we can STAND in CONFIDENCE before JESUS. This is NOT about EARNING our WAY into HEAVEN. It's about RESPONDING to CHRIST'S LOVE for US with the SPIRIT of CHRIST IN US ... That's the FIRST BLESSING. Do you LIKE IT?

Press on... 1 JOHN 3:21-22 = *Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. 22And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.* The 2nd BLESSING from SHOWING Truth-

Answered PRAYER IF you will LIVE OUT your FAITH in JESUS and OBEY HIM ... DO the THINGS that PLEASE HIM ... OBEY His COMMANDS and MAKE His PRAYERS come TRUE ... Then, your HEART is RIGHT with CHRIST and YOU will RECEIVE WHATEVER you ASK of HIM in PRAYER (Because you will ask for "**RIGHT**" things)!

Think about JESUS and the REQUESTS He ANSWERED and DID NOT ANSWER. Blind BARTIMAEUS asked for His SIGHT. Jesus KNEW his HEART was FAITHFUL and BARTIMAEUS pointed OTHERS to JESUS. JAMES and JOHN (yep, this John) ASKED to be on JESUS RIGHT and LEFT when He came INTO His KINGDOM. Jesus said He COULD NOT GRANT THIS. IT was from Selfish / SELF-CENTERED / PRIDEFUL HEARTS.

How do we KEEP from BECOMING SELF-CENTERED? LOVE OTHERS. Jesus New Command ... LOVE ONE ANOTHER as I have LOVED YOU. When we are FOCUSED on HIS COMMANDS, it is DIFFICULT to be FOCUSED on OURS. Read John 13-15?

John REITERATES ... 1 JOHN 3:23-24 = *And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. 24Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.* 3rd Blessing =

FELLOWSHIP When we're OBEDIENT from our HEARTS ... in ACTION ... to GOD'S / JESUS' COMMANDS to LOVE ONE ANOTHER, we have FELLOWSHIP (ONENESS) with GOD the FATHER, the SON, and EACH other as FAMILY! This FELLOWSHIP LASTS for ALL ETERNITY! Let's DO THAT! This is "REAL LIFE" according to JOHN'S WRITINGS about JESUS. Let's PRAY Together!

Next Steps: *I will Memorize 1 John 3:16*
I will Read 1 John and Hebrews 11
I will Practice Love this week by paying attention to the needs of others.

Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us!
 In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information.

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today

• We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.
 It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is HIT "**SEND**" your COMPLETED Connection Card

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- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... **1 JOHN 3:24 = Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.**
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- NEXT WEEK: **GO! Into all the world...**

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."

Special thanks to Andy Stanley, Warren Wiersbe, Nelson Searcy, and R.A. Pegram for outlines and ideas for this worship series