

# 1 John 3:17 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

**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?**

**Greek** - os de an eche (3SPAI) ton bion tou kosmou kai theore (3SPAS) ton adelphon (3SPAS) autou chreian echonta (PAPMSA) kai kleise (3SAAS) a splanchna autou ap autou pos e agape tou theou menei (3SPAI) en auto ?

**NET** - But whoever has the world's possessions and sees his fellow Christian in need and shuts off his compassion against him, how can the love of God reside in such a person?

**Wuest** - But whoever has as a constant possession the necessities of life, and deliberately keeps on contemplating his brother constantly having need, and snaps shut his heart from him, how is it possible that the love of God is abiding in him?

- **Whoever** - Dt 15:7-11 Pr 19:17 Isa 58:7-10 Lu 3:11 2Co 8:9,14,15 9:5-9 1Ti 6:17,18 Heb 13:16
- **Closes his heart:** Pr 12:10 Pr 28:9
- **how:** 1Jn 4:20, 5:1
- [1 John 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HOW TO LAY DOWN OUR LIFE IN DOWN TO EARTH TERMS!

**Sermon by Charles Simeon** - [NO LOVE TO GOD WITHOUT LOVE TO MAN](#)

John "has a penchant for applying practical tests of the validity of one's faith. How can we know whether we would sacrifice our life for a brother? We can know by being compassionate toward him in his present need. If we are unable or unwilling to sacrifice material advantage for the sake of our brother, we know the love of God is not in us." (Glen Barker)

**But** - Introduces a **term of contrast**. Whenever you encounter a "**but**" pause and ponder, asking at least "**What is the contrast?**" In this case John describes the opposite of laying down one's life for the brethren. John gives a rhetorical question which expects a negative answer -- i.e., the love of God does not abide in such a person, which is the antithesis of the sacrificial love of Christ (1Jn 3:16), which is children are called to imitate. The upshot is that a person who fails utterly to demonstrate this quality of love does not have God's love residing in them. In a word, they are not a genuine child of God.

**Vine** - the "**But**" suggests that it would be a mistake to regard the manifestation of love as simply consisting of great and noble deeds such as laying down one's life. The greater includes the less. The test of true love lies not so much in heroic actions as in matters of daily experience and in communicating to the needs of others.

**NET Note** - Note the vivid contrast with Jesus' example in the preceding verse: He was willing to lay down his very life, but the person in view in 1Jn 3:17 is not even willing to lay down part of his material possessions for the sake of his brother.

**John Stott** - true love is revealed not only in the supreme sacrifice; it is expressed in all lesser givings. ([Ref](#))

**John Piper** - Verse 17 brings Christian love down to earth in a hurry, and it places Christian love squarely in the midst of everyday life. ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

**William Barclay** - Someone may say: 'How can I follow in the steps of Christ? He laid down his life upon the cross. You say I ought to lay down my life for others. But opportunities as dramatic as that do not come into my life. What then?' John's answer is: 'True. But when you see someone who is in need and you have enough, to give that person from what you have is to follow Christ. To shut your heart and to refuse to give is to show that the love of God which was in Jesus Christ has no place in you.' ([1 John 3 Commentary - Daily Study Bible](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - the test of Christian love is not simply failure to do evil to others. Love also involves doing them good. Christian love is both positive and negative. "Cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16-17)... It is easy for us to talk about "loving the brethren" and to neglect to help a single other believer. Christian love is personal and active... In these days of multiplied social agencies, it is easy for Christians to forget their obligations. "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10). (Compare Hebrews 13:16 "And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.") ([Wiersbe Bible Commentary](#))

**Harris** - Note the vivid contrast with Jesus' example in the preceding verse: he was willing to lay down his very life, but the person in view here in 1Jn 3:17 is not even willing to lay down part of his material possessions for the sake of his fellow Christian! This is the same Greek word used in 1John 2:16, where it is translated by the NET Bible as "material possessions." ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

**Whoever has... and sees** - These are the two conditions which precede a practical demonstration of love for the brethren. See below for John Piper's amplification of this point.

**Whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need** (more literally having need) - Note both parties have something.

One brother has the personal means to meet a need. The other brother has a need to be met. And John uses the verb have (echo) is to describe both brother (both uses in **present tense** = continually), first the brother **having** enough and then the brother **having** need!

**World's goods** - Those basics needed in order to stay alive - food, shelter, clothing.

**World's** (2889)(**kosmos**) is often used in a moral sense to describe that "anti-God" atmosphere in which fallen humanity lives in and breathes, so to speak. However in this context **kosmos** is morally neutral and describes the world generically, humanity in general.

**Goods** (979)(**bios**) refers to resources needed to maintain life, "one's means of subsistence - material goods or property" (BDAG). That by which life is sustained, resources, wealth (Vincent). John has used bios in 1Jn 2:16-**note** to describe "the boastful pride of **life**." In using this word bios, John is simply speaking of livelihood and not of someone who is rich per se. It is a description of someone who has the basics necessary for life. That is who he is saying should supply his brother's needs.

**C H Dodd** - 'There were occasions in the life of the early church, as there are certainly tragic occasions at the present day, for a quite literal obedience to this precept, [that is, to lay down our life for the brothers]. But not all life is tragic; and yet the same principle of conduct must apply all through. Thus it may call for the simple expenditure of money we might have spent upon ourselves, to relieve the need of someone poorer. It is, after all, the same principle of action, though at a lower level of intensity: it (**love**) **is the willingness to surrender that which has value for our own life, to enrich the life of another**. If such a minimum response to the law of charity, called for by such an everyday situation, is absent, then it is idle to pretend we are within the family of God, the realm in which love is operative as the principle and the token of eternal life.'

Paul alluded to the believer's sufficiency which would enable them to share with needy brothers...

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed (2Cor 9:8)

**Stott** - John writes that if anyone has material possessions (Gk. bion)**and sees his brother in need**, he is in debt to him. ([Ref](#))

**And sees** (2334)(**theoreo** from **theaomai** = to look at closely or attentively or contemplatively - even with a sense of wonder; cp **theoros** = a spectator; English = theater) describes rapt contemplation of a vision (of a moving spectacle - cp Mt 27:55), calm, intent, continuous contemplation of an object which remains before the spectator. **Theoreo** signifies more than a casual, passing glance, but speaks of a continual (**present tense**), contemplative observation of the brother's circumstances. **A E Brooke** says **theoreo** is "not merely cast a passing glance, but see, long enough to appreciate and understand the circumstances of the case." (cp **theoreo** in Jn. 20:6; Acts 4:13; Rev 11:11) In other words the brother who is not giving aid is not because he has not seen his brother's need! The is interesting as it indicates that the seeing (and thus the awareness) is not a hasty, momentary glance, but that the brother's need has been seen over a protracted period of time! Sad commentary!

**Westcott** adds that **theoreo** "from which we get our word theatre, connotes beholding "as a spectacle on which he allows his eyes to rest." The word is used in John 2:23 concerning those who believed in Jesus when they "saw" the miracles he did. The word connotes attention, wonder, reflection.

**His brother (singular)** - Not just the generalization to love the **brethren**. Now John gets very specific.

As **David Allen** said "Saying we love everybody in general may become an excuse for loving nobody in particular! Like the little boy on the crowded elevator who was overheard to say, "Mommy, I love mankind; it's people I can't stand," many of us find clever ways to disguise our dislike or hatred of someone. "How often does polite civility disguise undisclosed feelings of antipathy and aversion?" is a question well asked by Gary Burge. If we are to love everybody, does that mean we have to like everybody? How do I go about loving people I don't like, even in the church? I'm just asking the question I know you are asking right now in your mind! It seems to me there is a very clear, practical distinction between liking and loving. Common sense coupled with life experience makes it evident that we simply cannot and will not like everybody we meet, even in the church. Personalities being what they are, not to mention temperament, appearance, behavior, and mannerisms, make it inevitable that in life's journey you are going to like some people more than others. Remember, not everybody likes you either! Liking is a matter of personal preference. Loving is a matter of obedience to Christ and the Word of God. Love penetrates beyond the superficial and moves to the essence of the person. It overcomes obstacles and excuses. Love sees beyond what it does not like in a person and minimizes it in order to see the person as Christ sees him. Then seeing the person in that way opens the door to acting toward that person in a Christlike way. Loving people you don't like means treating them as if you did like them! You choose to act toward them in a way that is pleasing to Christ and that exhibits how Christ would act toward them. The nature of Christian love is that it acts, it gives, it expresses itself toward others. ([1-3 John- Fellowship in God's Family Preaching the Word](#))

**Daniel Akin** comments on **his brother** (not brethren or brothers) - The change from the plural in 1Jn 3:16 ("brothers") to the singular here (ton adelphon) is deliberate and significant in that it makes the duty of helping a fellow member of the Christian community

more individualized in its application. As Lewis observes: *"It is easier to be enthusiastic about Humanity with a capital 'H' than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved, or otherwise unattractive. Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular."*

**Need** (5532)(chreia) describes necessities, whether it be material (Mk 2:25) or spiritual (Eph 4:29-note). In the context of describing the church in Philippi supplying the needs for his missionary work, Paul wrote "And my God shall supply all your **needs** according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Php 4:19-note) In his letter to Titus Paul exhorted him writing "let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing **needs**, that they may not be unfruitful (Titus 3:14-note. On fruit see 1Th 2:19-20-note), and Pr 19:17 = "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and **He will repay him** for his good deed.")

The newly born church in Acts immediately saw their brothers' **needs** and provided for them Luke recording that

"they (brethren in the church at Jerusalem) began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have **need**." (Acts 2:45)

"For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had **need**." (Acts 4:34-35)

**And closes his heart** ("shuts off compassion!") - This is the opposite of Jesus' volitional choice to lay down His life for others (1Jn 3:16). Clearly heart does not refer to the physical organ but to the seat and center of one's mercy and compassion.

**A T Robertson** says the picture is "to close like the door, changed on purpose from present tense to aorist (to signify) graphic slamming the door of his compassion!... It is practical not speculative that counts in the hour of need!"

**John Trapp** on **closes his heart** - shutteth up his bowels - Not drawing out unto him both his sheaf and his soul, Isaiah 58:9. But locking up as with a key (so the Greek kleio signifies) both his barn and his bowels; not considering his brother's necessity and his own ability.

**Moses** gives us some Hebrew background for closing one's heart as he warns the children of Israel against callous disregard for the needs of the poorer brethren...

If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, **you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand** from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. "Beware, lest there is a base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission (all debts forgiven), is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing (reasoning that he will soon be "off the hook" and I'll never see my money!); then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you. "You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. "For the poor will never cease [to be] in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.' (Deuteronomy 15:7-11 )

**Closes his heart** - The picture is slamming the door shut, locking it and throwing away the the key!

**Closes** (2808)(kleio) literally means to shut, close or lock a door (after the resurrection the disciples were together and the doors were shut... for fear of the Jews = Jn 20:19, 26). **Kleio** is used figuratively here in 1Jn 3:17 to describe the shutting of (slamming shut) one's heart to the brethren who are clearly in need (a need clearly seen - **theoreo**). Indeed, the use of the **aorist tense** suggests this is a deliberate, hard-hearted act of neglect in spite of what the "better off" brother has observed!

**Daniel Akin** adds that the verb **closes** "literally means "to close or lock a door." Here it is employed figuratively to portray the erection of a barrier that encloses one's sympathetic feelings and isolates them from the needs of another. **Robertson** says it is the slamming of the door in the face of another's need." (1, 2, 3 John- An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture)

**Hiebert** - Now the verb "shutteth up" is in the aorist, depicting a specific response to what he observed. He has noted the other's need and is aware of the call for sympathetic action to meet that need; instead he restrains his initial sympathy and "shutteth up his bowels of compassion." His self-centered interests lead him to shut out any consideration for the needs of the brother. The verb literally means to close or lock a door or gate; here it is used figuratively to depict his deliberate erection of a barrier between himself and the brother so that his sympathetic action cannot flow out to him. His response is the exact opposite of that of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-34). (1 John 3:13-24 Online) (The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary)

**James** describes a similar picture of deliberate hardhearted turning one's back on a needy brother...

If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for [their] body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, [being] by itself. (James 2:15-17-note)

**Comment:** Even as no works signifies a dead faith, the slamming of one's heart shut to a brother's obvious needs for basic necessities of life signifies a dead love in that heart!

**Heart** (4698)(**spilagchnon**) literally means the bowels or viscera (think that feeling we all get in the pit of our stomach when we're called on to pray in front of the whole church!), which was regarded by the Orientals as the seat of the emotions, the place where love and fear are felt, and is used in the NT as a metaphor for the heart, the seat of tender affection and emotion (see Col 3:12-note, cp Philemon 1:7, 12, 20 where "**heart**" = **spilagchnon**). **Spilagchnon** is the strongest word in Greek for the feeling of compassion, the expression of compassionate love, feelings of kindness, goodwill, mercy. John is saying to close this door in the face of other's obvious needs is a supreme example of failure to demonstrate love to others!

**John Piper** - Two conditions are given in 1Jn 3:17, which place a Christian under an inescapable obligation to help his brother in need, to be a Good Samaritan. They are, first, having "the world's goods." The word translated "goods" is the Greek word, "bios," the same word John used in 1 John 2:16 to refer to "the pride of life (bios)" which is of the world. The word refers to the resources needed for life in this world. And according to John these resources, this "bios," can either be a source of pride or a vehicle of love. The second condition referred to in 1Jn 3:17 is that of seeing your brother in need (either with your own eyes or with the eyes of others—such as missionaries, the media, etc.). John's point is that if both conditions are met, if you behold a need in your brother's life and if you have resources to meet that need, you cannot stand idly by. If you do, if you "close your heart against [your brother]," if you have no pity in your heart for him, if you take no action to meet his need, the conclusion is obvious. God's love isn't in you. God's love to you cannot be bottled up, contained. It will inevitably flow out of you. And therefore John can assert that if there is no outflow, it is evidence that there has been no inflow. Verse 17 brings Christian love down to the nitty-gritty of everyday life, does it not? It means sharing your material resources with those in need, be it spiritual or physical need. And even those of you who are on the most limited income have something to share. Perhaps with individuals directly, or through the church, or through agencies such as CES or other mission agencies. But the point is clear. **How can we say that we are willing to lay down our lives for our brothers if we are unwilling to part with our money for their sake?** 1Jn 3:17 means sharing your time with others in need. Many times that's what a person needs far more than he needs money. It takes time to be a friend; it takes time to talk, to listen, to relieve loneliness. And for many of us it is harder to part with our time than with our money. That's where the heart of the battle is for me. My guess is that's where the heart of the battle is for many of you as well. But if you or I close our hearts with respect to time towards a brother or sister in need, how can God's love be in us? 1 Jn 3:17 can also mean sharing spiritual resources with a person in need through a word of encouragement or exhortation from the Bible and through consistent intercessory prayer. And in many cases the sacrifice demanded is greatest at this point. The spiritual battles are very real and very intense, the spiritual energy required is staggering, but the rewards are rich and the glory abounding to the name of God is very, very great. All of this is love. And a consistent lifestyle of heartfelt love that is practical, sacrificial is what God expects of his children. And this lifestyle of love is what God empowers in each of his children through his Spirit. Loving one another is not unimportant for us as Christians. It is indeed a matter of life and death. Our lives loving one another with Christlike love will be lives of joy as we experience the truth of Jesus' words that it is more blessed to give than to receive. They will be lives of assurance as we find solid evidence that God has indeed by his grace brought us out of death into life. They will be lives of enriching the lives of others. And they will be lives that bring great glory to God, for they will cause others to see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven. And so, brothers and sisters, I close in the same way John closes this section—with a word of exhortation: "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth." ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

**Allen** - Fellow Christians in need should arouse our compassion and pity to the point that we act to help. If we don't do so, John asks a pertinent rhetorical question: "how does God's love abide in him?"

**Harris on the love of God** - The difficulty in this phrase lies in its ambiguity —(tou qeou, "of God") can be understood as either objective genitive (meaning "*our love for God*") or as subjective genitive (meaning "*God's love for us*"). Here a subjective genitive, indicating God's love for us — the love which comes from God — appears more likely because of the parallelism with "**eternal life**" in 1 John 3:15, which also comes from God. Thus the author is not saying that the person who does not love his brother cannot love God either (*although this may be true enough*), but rather that the person who does not love his brother shows by this failure to love that he does not have any of the love which comes from God 'residing' in him. Once again, conduct is the clue to paternity, or as Malatesta observed, "*Christian love implies Christian faith.*" ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

**W E Vine** agrees with Harris explaining that "by **the love of God**" is primarily intended God's love to us, for He is the source of love; yet this is intended to meet with a response on our part, so that His love becomes manifested in our actions."

However **David Smith** on **love of God** favors "objective genitive, inspired by and answering to the love which God feels (subjective



genitive). ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Daniel Akin** offers the best summary of the **love of God** - John's rhetorical question, "How can the love of God be in him?" challenges his readers to evaluate this pitiless response. The genitive case "of God" (tou theou) has been interpreted in three different ways: (1) as a subject genitive, referring to God as the author of this love (God's love); (2) as an objective genitive, speaking of God as the one being loved (love for God); and (3) as a descriptive genitive, a God-like love. In addressing this issue, **Hiebert** suggests, "Whatever the intended meaning, in the operation of true Christian love, both the subjective and objective aspects of the 'love of God' are involved." The one who possesses God's love demonstrates that love to others. And as **Marshall** declares: "Christian love is love which gives to those in need, and so long as we have, while our brothers have little or nothing, and we do nothing to help them, we are lacking in the love which is essential evidence that we are truly children of God." ([1, 2, 3 John- An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture](#))

**Kruse** - It is difficult to know how to construe **the love of God** in this verse. It could mean 'love for God'. If so, it would be in line with what the author says later: 'If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen' (1Jn 4:20). There it is emphasized that love for God and love for fellow believers go hand in hand. Alternatively it could mean the 'love that comes from God', and the verse would then say that love coming from God is not found in a person who shows no pity to those in need. While it is difficult to say which shade of meaning the author intended here, both represent genuine aspects of the author's understanding of the love of God. In Johannine terms the love which comes from God both creates believers' love for fellow believers (1 John 4:19) and expresses itself in love for them (1 John 4:20). ([The Letters of John The Pillar New Testament Commentary- Colin G. Kruse](#))

**Jamieson** - "Faith gives Christ to me; love flowing from faith gives me to my neighbor."

**John Gill** - neither the love with which God loves men; for if this was shed abroad in him, and had a place, and dwelt in him, and he was properly affected with it, it would warm his heart, and loosen his affections, and cause his bowels to move to his poor brother: nor the love with which God is loved; for if he does not love his brother whom he sees in distress, how should he love the invisible God? 1 John 4:20; nor that love which God requires of him, which is to love his neighbour as himself.

**Love (26)(agape)** is supernatural, Spirit enabled, selfless, sacrificial love for others independent of how they treat us or respond. It is the love of God that flows out of Spirit filled saints to their brethren. If such love does not flow out to the brethren, it is most likely that they are not Spirit filled!

**David Smith** on **love** for the brethren - Love must be practical. It is easy to "lay down one's life": martyrdom is heroic and exhilarating; the difficulty lies in doing the little things, facing day by day the petty sacrifices and self-denials which no one notices and no one applauds. (**Are you as convicted as I am?**) ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Abide (3306)(meno)** as noted above means to remain or stay. **Meno** is in the **present tense** which speaks of the love of God continually abiding, which it does in all genuine believers. God's love in our hearts is not fickle (like ours often is), coming and going, depending on whether He thinks we deserve it (which of course we don't)!

As support for interpreting this abiding love is in fact a believer's continual possession (and a mark of our authenticity), we see Paul's description of "the love of God (that) has been **poured out (ekcheo)** within our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who was given to us." (Ro 5:5-note) The verb **poured out** is in the **perfect tense** which speaks of past completed action with ongoing effect (i.e., permanence of this possession of God love - i.e., God's love does not cease to abide in a believer's heart! Hallelujah!).

**Harris** adds that "This is not to say that such a person cannot claim to be a Christian—note 1 John 2:4note: *"The one who says 'I have come to know God' and yet does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in such a person."* Here again we are dealing with the major problem underlying the entire letter: the opponents are claiming to be in relationship with God, but are refusing to share with their fellow believers in need, and this (for the author) constitutes conclusive proof that the opponents' **profession** to know God (or, as here, to have God's love residing in them) must be false. As elsewhere in 1 John, conduct becomes the clue to paternity... The semantic force of the deliberative rhetorical question, "How can the love of God reside in him?", therefore becomes a declarative statement about the spiritual condition of the opponents, meaning "The love of God cannot possibly reside in him." ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

**John Stott** - As **life does not dwell in the murderer** (1Jn 3:15), so **love does not dwell in the miser** (1Jn 3:17). ([Ref](#))

**Glenn Barker** sums up this verse - If we are in a position to see (theōreō) with our own eyes his need, as, for example, the good Samaritan did, and can offer help, then we cannot do otherwise than act. To withhold help from a brother in need, to shut off compassionate action, is to deny the presence of God's love in one's own heart. As Dodd says, "**If such a minimal response to the law of charity, called for by such an everyday situation, is absent, then it is idle to pretend that we are within the family of God, the realm in which love is operative as the principle and the token of eternal life**" (Johannine Epistles, p. 86).

**Hiebert** - Jesus insists that the command to "love the Lord thy God" cannot be separated from the command to "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:35–40). He who professes to love God while refusing to express love toward his unfortunate brother through a compassionate sharing of his own means discredits his claim and subjects himself to the charge of hypocrisy. ([1 John 3:13-24 Online](#)) ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#))

**Adam Clarke** - Here is a test of this love; if we do not divide our bread with the hungry, we certainly would not lay down our life for him. Whatever love we may pretend to mankind, if we are not charitable and benevolent, we give the lie to our profession.

**Barnes** - How can a man love God who does not love those who bear his image?

**Cole on how does the love of God abide in him** - Ouch! It's easy to say that you would lay down your life for the brethren. But if you aren't doing it inch by inch, in the little details of setting aside your selfishness to serve others, beginning at home ("Husbands, **love** [present imperative = command to do this continually! Just try this in your own natural strength! You {} desperately need to yield to Eph 5:18-note] your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" - Eph. 5:25-note), it's empty talk to say, "I'd die for my brothers in Christ!" Self-sacrifice is never convenient. It's always more of a hassle to meet someone's needs than to ignore him. But, John's point is the same as Jesus' point in the parable of the Good Samaritan: We must not ignore others' needs, but rather, sacrifice our time, energy, and money to help them out. This does not mean indiscriminately doling out money to those who are lazy or irresponsible (2Th 3:10-12). We need discernment and wisdom to know how best to help a needy person. But we also need to be careful not to excuse our indifference by labeling the other person as lazy or irresponsible. Love unites people through practical deeds of self-sacrifice... While this fruit of the Spirit never grows to perfect maturity in this lifetime, you should be able to see growth in love when you compare your self-centered life before conversion with your focus since you were saved. If you say that you know Christ, but continue to live for yourself, if you're unwilling to be inconvenienced or sacrifice yourself and your possessions to meet the needs of others, you need to examine whether or not you've truly passed out of death into life. If you have tasted God's love in Christ at the cross, the new direction of your life will be to grow in love for others. ([1 John 3:11-18 Hatred or Love?](#))

**Wiersbe** - A young mother admitted, in a testimony meeting, that she never seemed to find time for her own personal devotions. She had several little children to care for, and the hours melted away. Imagine her surprise when two of the ladies from the church appeared at her front door. "We've come to take over," they explained. "You go into the bedroom and get started on your devotions." After several days of this kind of help, the young mother was able to develop her devotional life so that the daily demands on her time no longer upset her. If we want to experience and enjoy the love of God in our own hearts, we must love others, even to the point of sacrifice. Being indifferent to a brother's needs means robbing ourselves of what we need even more: the love of God in our hearts. It is a matter of love or death! ([Wiersbe Bible Commentary](#))

**Uttley** - Again our actions reveal our father!

**Spurgeon** answers John's rhetorical question **how does the love of God abide in him?** - Indeed, it cannot be there at all; he has the love of himself, and not the love of God, dwelling in him.

**John Piper** - Not many of us will have the opportunity to die for one another. But what we all have constantly are opportunities to demonstrate Christlike love in lesser, more nitty-gritty ways—like sharing our possessions with those in need. 1Jn 3:17 brings Christian love down to earth in a hurry, and it places Christian love squarely in the midst of everyday life. "**If any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?**" Two conditions are given in 1Jn 3:17, which place a Christian under an inescapable obligation to help his brother in need, to be a Good Samaritan. (1) They are, first, having "**the world's goods.**" The word translated "goods" is the Greek word, "bios," the same word John used in 1 John 2:16 to refer to "the pride of life (bios)" which is of the world. The word refers to the resources needed for life in this world. And according to John these resources, this "bios," can either be a source of pride or a vehicle of love. (2) The second condition referred to in 1 Jn 3:17 is that of seeing your brother in need (either with your own eyes or with the eyes of others—such as missionaries, the media, etc.). John's point is that if both conditions are met, if you behold a need in your brother's life and if you have resources to meet that need, you cannot stand idly by. If you do, if you "**close your heart against [your brother],**" if you have no pity in your heart for him, if you take no action to meet his need, the conclusion is obvious. God's love isn't in you. God's love to you cannot be bottled up, contained. It will inevitably flow out of you. And therefore John can assert that if there is no outflow, it is evidence that there has been no inflow. **Verse 17 brings Christian love down to the nitty-gritty of everyday life, does it not?** It means sharing your material resources with those in need, be it spiritual or physical need. And even those of you who are on the most limited income have something to share. Perhaps with individuals directly, or through the church, or through agencies such as CES or other mission agencies. But the point is clear. How can we say that we are willing to lay down our lives for our brothers if we are unwilling to part with our **money** for their sake? 1Jn 3:17 means sharing your **time** with others in need. Many times that's what a person needs far more than he needs money. It takes time to be a friend; it takes time to talk, to listen, to relieve loneliness. **And for many of us it is harder to part with our time than with our money.** That's where the heart of the battle is for me. My guess is

that's where the heart of the battle is for many of you as well. But if you or I close our hearts with respect to time towards a brother or sister in need, how can God's love be in us? 1Jn 3:17 can also mean sharing **spiritual resources** with a person in need through a word of encouragement or exhortation from the Bible and through consistent intercessory prayer. And in many cases the sacrifice demanded is greatest at this point. The spiritual battles are very real and very intense, the spiritual energy required is staggering, but the rewards are rich and the glory abounding to the name of God is very, very great. All of this is love. **And a consistent lifestyle of heartfelt love that is practical, sacrificial is what God expects of his children. And this lifestyle of love is what God empowers in each of his children through his Spirit.** Loving one another is not unimportant for us as Christians. It is indeed a matter of life and death. Our lives loving one another with Christlike love will be lives of joy as we experience the truth of Jesus' words that it is more blessed to give than to receive. They will be lives of assurance as we find solid evidence that God has indeed by his grace brought us out of death into life. They will be lives of enriching the lives of others. And they will be lives that bring great glory to God, for they will cause others to see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven (Mt 5:16). And so, brothers and sisters, I close in the same way John closes this section—with a word of exhortation: **"Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth."** ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

**Charles Ryrie in Balancing the Christian Life** on money with loving our brethren - The apostle John links money and the love of God: "But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). This verse is preceded by one which says we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren in order to give the ultimate proof of love. But, of course, most Christians will never have the opportunity to do this even if they would seize it if it came. How, then, can the believer in ordinary circumstances show that he loves his brother and thus God? The answer is simple: by giving money and goods to his brother. If he fails to do this, then he shows not only that he does not love his brother but also that he does not love God. There is scarcely anyone who cannot give; therefore, all can show by this means the measure of their love for God. Giving of money and things is a manifestation and responsibility of a truly spiritual life.

How, then, do we properly discharge this responsibility? Without apology the New Testament places a great deal of emphasis on the subject of giving. There are commands, practical suggestions, warnings, examples, and exhortations concerning this important ministry. Everywhere in the Bible miserliness, greed, and avarice are denounced; and generosity, hospitality, and charity are extolled. Money is not a carnal or worldly subject to be avoided or spoken of only after "more important" matters have been considered. The same word that is used for our fellowship with the Lord is also used in relation to the fellowship of collecting money (2Cor. 8:4). This clearly underlines the spiritual character of giving. Furthermore, giving is a spiritual gift (Rom. 12:8) which is available to all believers to have and to use. And it is a gift which all Christians can exercise regardless of their financial status.

There is always a tendency when we read the Bible passages that speak of money or rich people to apply them to someone else. We invariably look at the person in the next higher income bracket and transfer the teaching of such passages to him. We too easily forget that there is someone in the next lower income range who is looking at us and applying the teaching to us! Each of us is a rich person to someone else; therefore, these teachings apply to all of us.

What should be one's guide in grace giving? Undoubtedly, the New Testament passage which sets forth most concisely the basic principles of giving is 1 Corinthians 16:2: "On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." In this single verse are laid down four principles of giving.

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**Remembered By A Nail** - Read: 1 John 3:16-23 | Emil Mettler, a restaurant owner in London, was known for his generosity. He often fed people for nothing. If a representative of a Christian organization came in and told him of a need, he would open his cash drawer and give a sizable donation.

One day Emil opened his cash drawer in the presence of a missionary official who noticed a nail among the bills and coins. Surprised at what he saw, the man asked, "What's that doing there?" Emil picked up the 6-inch spike and replied, "I keep this with my money to remind me of the price Christ paid for my salvation and what I owe Him in return."

Emil used that nail to remind himself that he owed the Lord a great debt of love and gratitude because Jesus had laid down His life for him (1 John 3:16-23). Emil used that simple object to stimulate his own generosity as he remembered the Savior's sacrifice.

How often do we think about the sacrifice on Calvary where Jesus paid the penalty for our sin with His own death on the cross? Emil's example inspires us in the midst of our most mundane activities to remember not just the thorns, the nails, and the spear-thrust, but the loving heart of Him who gave His life for us. — By Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Teach me to love as Thou dost love,  
And let the whole world know



That Jesus Christ lives in my heart,  
His glorious light to show. —Brandt

Christ gave Himself for us that we might give ourselves for others.

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**A Talent To Care** - Read: 1 John 3:10-18 | I'm not a talented guy," says John Haggai. "I don't sing, I don't preach. I don't teach. I guess I'm just here to help people."

For Kirk Porter, that's enough. For the past 25 years, through the Big Brother program, John has been faithfully helping Kirk make it through life. Kirk, who is now in his early thirties but has the mental capacity of an 11-year-old, calls John "the best dad in the whole world." The countless hours they have spent together have forged a bond of friendship that supports Kirk as he battles a brain tumor.

John Haggai is wrong. He is a talented guy. He has the talent of helping the helpless—which is a sign of true religion (Jas. 1:27). He is giving the kind of love that Jesus calls us to give (1 Jn. 3:17). He has the talent to give of himself, to share his life, and to make life easier for someone who has nothing but love to give in return.

The talent to care is the most underrated talent God gives. Caring and loving and nurturing have value that transcends the high-profile talents that put people in the spotlight.

As Kirk faces life in hospice care, awaiting the inevitable results of his disease, he says with confidence, "I'm not scared now. I have Jesus on my side." He has John Haggai too. That's an unbeatable combination. By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A caring heart, a listening ear,  
A thoughtful word, a gentle tear  
Will help to lift the heavy load  
Of weary souls along life's road. —DJD

In life's relentless wear and tear,  
God gives us those who care and share.

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**Help On The Way** - Read: 1 John 3:11-20 | Our friends were traveling from Georgia to Illinois in a rented van. About halfway to their destination, their van was damaged when it hit a huge hole in the road. Other cars were disabled as well, and it was a rather chaotic scene.

While our friends were sorting things out, a police officer offered to drop them off at a nearby McDonald's. When they got there, they sat in a booth to await word about getting the van fixed. Because of their dedication to serving others, they didn't have much money.

Meanwhile, they had called to let us know about the difficulty, but there wasn't much we could do except pray and trust that God would watch over them. As they and their children sat in the booth, a man came over with bags of burgers and fries. "God told me I should give you some food," he explained as he delivered supper for the hungry family.

How many times have we seen God send help on the way? On the flip side, how many times have we felt the urge to help someone—and balked at the notion?

We are God's hands on earth—created both to receive help and to give it. Do you know someone who needs help on the way? By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jesus taught when He lived on this earth  
How to show love to the lost;  
Don't be afraid to give a kind touch,  
No matter how much it may cost. —Carbaugh

A helping hand can lighten another's burden.

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**Success and Failure** - When thinking of success, who are some of the most successful athletes in history in your opinion? I think of men and women like Annika Sorenstam (golf), Richard Petty (NASCAR), or Nolan Ryan (baseball). Their careers were decidedly

successful, and they have the numbers to back that up. Annika had 72 LPGA wins to go along with her 10 major titles. “The King” of NASCAR, Richard Petty, got his nickname by recording 200 Cup wins—a feat that will likely never be matched. Nolan Ryan? Well, all he did was strike out a record 5,714 batters and notch a record 7 no-hitters. Wow. No one could deny the success of these great competitors. But, is that all there is? What happens on the field is only a part of the equation. Some of how you define successful athletes depends upon how you define success. Is it the batting average that is hall-of-fame worthy, or is it the character of an athlete who is willing to step away from sport altogether to help a wife with breast cancer—like NFL linebacker Chris Spielman did. It seems clear that, while success on the field can be measured with statistics and championships, success in life must be defined by the content of the heart rather than the content of the stat sheets. This was the point that the apostle John was making in **1 John 3:17 when he wrote: 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?** We can measure success according to the standards set by the culture around us, but if we don’t have a heart for people, we will fail to be a success in the things that matter most. Our accomplishments and possessions can be good and meaningful and mark a certain kind of success, but a heart of concern for the needs of others will express the eternal love of God in a tangible way—and that is true success. Join us tomorrow on Sports Spectrum Radio. We’ll take a further look at the need for a healthy perspective as we face the challenges of life. Bill Crowder, Sport Spectrum Chaplain

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**Goats For Jesus** - Read: 1 John 3:16-20 | When Dave and Joy Mueller felt God prompting them to move to Sudan as missionaries, all they knew was that they would be helping to build a hospital in that war-ravaged land. How could they know that goats would be in their future?

As Joy began working with the women, she discovered that many were widows because of the devastating civil war and had no way to earn a living. So Joy had an idea. If she could provide just one pregnant goat to a woman, that person would have milk and a source of income. To keep the program going, the woman would give the newborn kid back to Joy—but all other products from the goat would be used to support the woman’s family. The baby goat would eventually go to another family. The gift of goats given in Jesus’ name would change the life of numerous Sudanese women—and open the door for Joy to explain the gospel.

What is your equivalent to goats? What can you give a neighbor, a friend, or even someone you don’t know? Is it a ride? An offer to do yard work? A gift of material resources?

As believers in Christ, we have the responsibility to care for the needs of others (1 John 3:17). Our acts of love reveal that Jesus resides in our hearts, and giving to those in need may help us tell others about Him. By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, my heart is filled with love  
For others who have urgent needs  
So help me share in every way  
What I can give through words and deeds. —Hess

God gives us all we need, so let’s give to others in their need.

## GREEK WORD STUDIES

**Life, living** (goods) ([979](#))(**bios**; English - biology = study of living organisms) describes (1) life (lifetime) and the activity associated with living and (2) one’s livelihood, economic resources which one has as a means of living, the necessities of life, resources need to maintain life (of the poor widow’s gift which was all she had to **live** on = Mt 12:44, Lk 21:4). **Bios** means life but is distinct from **zoe** which also means life as the elemental principle of the spirit and soul, life in a more abstract sense. **Bios** refers to more concrete expressions of life, the daily living of living, one’s “manner of life” (source of our word “biography”). **BDAG** says that “Although there is frequent overlapping in usage, **bios** may be said to denote the manner in which one’s **zoe** finds expression, and the latter term may be used to connote quality of existence as such (this distinction illustrated by an ancient quote = “Here lies Similis, alive [bioo = verb form of bios] for a number of years, but really living [zao = verb form of **zoe**] for seven.”)” “**Zoē** is life as a principle; **bios** has to do more especially with the organic life of the body and its conditions.” (Vine) **Bios** covers both life and livelihood and includes anything of value in this present era and does not describe just the rich. John’s challenge is for all who have the necessities of life!

**Bios** - 10x in 10v - translated in **NAS** as: everyday life(1), goods(1), life(3), live(2), wealth(2).

Mark 12:44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to **live** on.”

Luke 8:14 "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this **life**, and bring no fruit to maturity.

Luke 15:12 "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his **wealth** between them.

30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your **wealth** with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

Luke 21:4 for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to **live** on."

1 Timothy 2:2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet **life** in all godliness and dignity.

2 Timothy 2:4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of **everyday life**, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of **life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

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?

**Bios** - 24x in the Septuagint (Read the poignant uses in the book of Job) - Ezra 7:26; Esther 3:13; Job 7:1, 6, 16; 8:9; 9:25; 10:5, 20; 12:12; 14:5-6, 14; 15:20; 21:13; Pr 3:2, 16; 4:10; 5:9; 16:17; 31:3, 12, 14; Song 8:7

**Closes** (2808)(**kleio**) literally means to shut or close (like shutting the door of your prayer room so that you pray in secret - Mt 6:6, **the door has already been shut** = Lk 11:7, after the resurrection the disciples were together and **the doors were shut... for fear of the Jews** = Jn 20:19, 26). Figuratively to shut the windows of heaven means to have no rain (Lk 4:25, Rev 11:6). In Mt 23:13 **kleio** is used metaphorically of the Scribes and Pharisees **shutting off the kingdom of heaven from men**. In the parable of the 10 virgins (Mt 25:1-12) the foolish virgins were shut out of the wedding feast (Mt 25:10) because the Lord did not know them (Mt 25:11, cp Mt 7:21-23). **Kleio** is used figuratively in 1Jn 3:17 to describe the shutting of one's heart to the obvious needs of their brethren. Kleio is used of Jesus who "**shuts and no one opens**." (Rev 3:7) In Rev 3:8 Jesus tells the church at Philadelphia "I have put before you an open door which no one can **shut**." In Rev 20:3 Satan is **shut** in the abyss for one thousand years. In Rev 21:25 the gates of the city of the New Jerusalem **shall never be closed**. The first use of kleio in the Septuagint describes God closing the door of the ark = "And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the LORD closed [it] behind him." (Ge 7:16).

**Kleio 15x** in **NAS** translated as: close(1), closed(1), closes(1), locked(1), shut(11), shuts(1). Matt 6:6; 23:13; 25:10; Luke 4:25; 11:7; John 20:19, 26; Acts 5:23; 21:30; 1 John 3:17; Rev 3:7f; 11:6; 20:3; 21:25

**Kleio 19x** in the **Septuagint** - Ge 7:16; Josh 2:5, 7; Jdg 9:51; 1Sa 23:20; 2Chr 28:24; Neh 6:10; 7:3; 13:19; Job 12:14; Eccl 12:4; Song 4:12; Isa 24:10; Isa 60:11 (refers to gates of the city of Jerusalem in the Millennium); Ezek 44:1-2 (refers to the Eastern Gate of the City); Ezek 46:1-2, 12;