

1 John 3:11 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 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another

- **This** - 1Jn 1:5, 2:7,8
- **Message** - 1Ti 1:5
- **We should** - 1Jn 4:7,21 John 13:34,35 15:12 Ga 6:2 Eph 5:2 1Th 4:9 1Pe 1:22 3:8 1Pe 4:8 2Jn 1:5

- 1 John 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Greek - Hoti aute estin (3PAI) e aggelia en ekousate (2PAAI) ap arche hina agapomen (1PPAS) allelous

NET - For this is the gospel message that you have heard from the beginning: that we should love one another

Wuest - Because this is the message which you heard from the beginning, to the effect that we should habitually be loving one another with a divine love.

BROTHERLY LOVE: A MARK OF THE CHILD OF GOD

Westcott sums up 1John 3:10-18 - "Life reveals the children of God!" And I would add specifically "Life in the family (love of the brethren)!"

Daniel Akin - John speaks of four different levels of relationships in which we can choose to live: murder (1Jn 3:11, 12), hatred (1Jn 3:13-15), indifference (1Jn 3:16, 17), and Christian love in action (1Jn 3:18). Being precedes doing, but all Christian doing must be based on being, that is, on who we are in Christ. Our practice proclaims who and what we are. ([Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, 3 John \(Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary\)](#))

William Barclay adds "We can tell what a tree is by its fruits, and similarly we can tell what a man or woman is by that person's conduct. John lays it down that anyone who does not do what is right is by that fact shown not to be of God." ([1 John 3 Commentary - Daily Study Bible](#))

Harris notes that "This section marks the beginning of the second major part of First John (1John 3:11–5:12)." ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

John Stott refers to 1Jn 3:11-18 as "an elaboration of the social test... namely that to love is the new command (which is yet old) and belongs to the new age in which **the true Light is already shining** (1Jn 2:8-note). As he now fills in his preliminary sketch, he uses no colours but black and white. He continues the stark contrast he has already pointed in 1Jn 3:10-note between the children of God and the children of the devil, and writes of hatred and love, life and death, murder and self-sacrifice." ([The Letters of John by John R. W. Stott](#))

Hawley - Our nature has consequences; eventually we act the way we really are. To love the brothers and sisters in the believing community demonstrates that we belong to God; to reject the brothers and sisters demonstrates that we don't really belong to God.

For (hoti) serves here as a marker of an explanatory clause, "drawing an inference based upon all that has preceded." Whenever you encounter a conjunction used as a **term of explanation**, pause and ask "**What is the writer explaining?**" As in this case, it will usually force you to examine the context.

Vine says **for this is the message** is "more literally, "Because the message is this," cp. 1 Jn 1:5. The message there spoke of the nature of God and its bearing on the Christian life. The message here instructs us as to our duty one to another. The readers heard it from the beginning, since it was among the first things inculcated in their hearts as believers, and not only so but it had been constantly repeated. Jerome informs us that toward the close of the apostle's life, after he had become too infirm to preach, he still continued constantly to give the exhortation, "Little children, love one another." He tells us how he remarked. "It is the Lord's command, and if this is done, it is enough." What is here stated, then, is that the manifestation of the character of Christ in the believer is the outcome of receiving the word of God. The gospel not only saves men but unites them to Christ and this produces in them that love which is essential in His character, was manifested by Him, embraces all the other qualities of the fruit of the spirit, and fulfills the law of God. (Collected Writings)

John Piper explains that " The **for** at the beginning of this verse shows that in John's mind 1Jn 3:11 is the ground or the reason for 1Jn 3:10, or more specifically the reason for why he can shift from righteousness in general as a test of divine sonship to the specific test of love for the brethren. The reason he can make that shift is that the command to love one another was what his readers had heard from the beginning. The moral imperative for Christians to love one another was at the heart of the apostolic Gospel. And it still is. From the very beginning, that is, from the very first time they heard the Gospel, John's readers knew beyond a shadow of a doubt what God would expect and would empower them to do: **love one another**... And any gospel you believe, any gospel you proclaim that does not include both doctrine and ethics is only half a gospel, tragically incomplete, radically distorted, hopelessly deficient. Both doctrine and ethics are at the heart of the gospel because they are so inextricably linked. The character of God, who as light is wholly righteous, true, and loving, demands and empowers moral responses on the part of his children. Supremely these moral responses are to be ones of love. Our love for one another is demanded by the character of God, but it is also empowered by

the brightness of the God who is light and love, with whom there is no small print. Only when we see and believe and cherish the brightness of God, will we be free to entrust ourselves and our futures into his hands. And then and only then will we be free to forget about ourselves in order to genuinely love someone else. John speaks of the evidence of love in 1 Jn 3:14–15, and sandwiching those verses on either side comes John's teaching about the essence of love. This teaching comes to us in the form of two contrasting pictures, a negative and a positive example, if you will. 1 Jn 3:12–13 show us the negative example, Cain, who in his hatred and ultimate murder of his brother Abel is the prototype of the world. His example, John says, is not at all to be followed by Christians. The positive example comes in 1Jn 3:16–18. That is Jesus Christ, whose example of self-sacrificial love is to be imitated and followed by us as his disciples." ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

Message (31)(**aggelia** related to **aggelos** = messenger; our English "Angel") means tidings, news, message, report. 1Jn 3:11 and 1Jn 1:5 are the only NT uses of **aggelia**. Used in the Septuagint 11x - 1Sa 4:19; 2Sa 4:4; 2Ki 19:7; Pr 12:25; 25:25; 26:16; Isa 28:9; 37:7; Ezek 7:26; 21:7; Nah 3:19. **Aggelia** os related to a number of important NT words including **aggello** - to announce, **paraggello** = command; **kataggello** - to proclaim, **euaggelion** = gospel, etc.

1John 1:5 And this is the **message** (**aggelia**) we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

NET Note - The word **aggelia** occurs only twice in the NT, 1Jn 1:5 and in 1 John 3:11. It is a cognate of **epaggelia** which occurs much more frequently (some 52 times in the NT) including 1Jn 2:25. **Aggelia** is closely equivalent to **euaggelion**: (1) it refers to the proclamation of the eyewitness testimony about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as proclaimed by the author and the rest of the apostolic witnesses (prologue, esp. 1Jn 1:3–4), and (2) it relates to the salvation of the hearers/readers, since the purpose of this proclamation is to bring them into fellowship with God and with the apostolic witnesses (1Jn 1:3). Because of this the adjective "gospel" is included in the English translation (The NET Bible = "the gospel message").

In the context the **message** is a reference to the original, apostolic Gospel, the good '**message**' of Him Who loved us (Jn 3:16) and which births children who exhibit a Spirit-enabled, supernatural love for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Marvin Vincent on message - "announcement," as of something good; not a mere command, as the law. The Gospel message of Him who loved us, announced by His servants, is, that we love the brethren; not here all mankind, but those who are our brethren in Christ, children of the same family of God, of whom we have been born anew.

Have heard (Same phrase in 1Jn 1:1, 1:5, 2:7, 3:11, 4:3) - What had they heard? This most likely refers to John 15:12 where Jesus said "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you." John 15:12 "is itself a restatement of the "new commandment" of John 13:34." ([Harris](#))

Stott explains that this original Gospel message "was also public knowledge in contrast to the private and secret enlightenment which the false teachers claimed. His readers will be safe if they hold fast to the message which they **heard**, and that publicly and openly, from the **beginning**... In both doctrine and ethics we must go right back to the **beginning** and enquire what the apostles originally taught and their first converts both had (1Jn 2:7, eichete, aorist) and **heard** (1Jn 2:24 and 1Jn 3:11, ēkousate, another aorist). An essential part of that message was that we should **love one another** (cf. 1Jn 3:23; 4:7; 11–12; 2John 1:5; John 13:34; 15:12, 17)." ([The Letters of John by John R. W. Stott](#))

From the beginning - Same phrase - 1Jn 1:1, 2:7, 2:13, 2:14, 2:24, 3:8, 3:11. Here John is referring to "the beginning of Jesus' self-revelation to his disciples in the course of his earthly life and ministry." ([Harris](#)) Earlier John had said

Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which **you have had from the beginning**; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. (1John 2:7 **note**)

Robertson on (the message) **from the beginning** - They had the message of love for the brotherhood from the beginning of the Gospel and it goes back to the time of Cain and Abel (1Jn 3:12).

From the outset of their Christian life, John's readers had been taught the importance of love for one another. It was not something they had never heard before. John was not telling them some new truth or something he had "invented." As John Calvin said "John reminds us that he was teaching nothing but what had been heard by the faithful concerning love from the beginning and had become old through long usage."

Vine - The readers heard it **from the beginning**, since it was among the first things inculcated in their hearts as believers, and not only so but it had been constantly repeated. Jerome informs us that toward the close of the apostle's life, after he had become too infirm to preach, he still continued constantly to give the exhortation, "Little children, love one another." He tells us how he remarked. "It is the Lord's command, and if this is done, it is enough."

Beginning (746)(*arche*) refers to the commencement of something as an action, process, or state of being. **Arché** refers to what is first or has primacy (the state of being first).

Love one another - This is the first of six uses by John of this phrase in his epistles - 1Jn 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 1:5. The other uses are found in John 13:34; 15:12, 17; Ro 13:8; 1Th 4:9; 1Pe 1:22. In reminding them of this message to love one another, John himself was remembering the command of Jesus in John 13:34 - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also **love one another**."

Piper - The wording of 1 Jn 3:11 is striking. It is a very close parallel (almost word for word) with 1 John 1:5. There the message which John's readers had heard was a doctrinal one, the theological foundation for their faith that rests in the character of God. "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5). Now in our verse today (1 Jn 3:11) the message they had heard from the beginning was equally foundational, but now not in the realm of doctrine, but of ethics. "For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." The doctrinal foundation that God is light and the moral, ethical foundation of love for one another are both at the heart of the apostolic gospel. The gospel is incomplete unless it includes both doctrine and ethics. ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

Love (25)(*agapao*) "speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved." ([Wuest](#))

Guzik - The basic Christian message has not changed. Perhaps some have thought that because Christians talk about a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ" that it is only us and Jesus who matter. But how we treat others - how we love one another - really matters before God. ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

John Piper: "The wording of 1Jn 3:11 is striking. It is a very close parallel (almost word for word) with I John 1:5. There the message which John's readers had heard was a doctrinal one, the theological foundation for their faith that rests in the character of God 'This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all' (1Jn 1:5). Now in our verse today (1Jn 3:11) the message they had heard from the beginning was equally foundational, but now not in the realm of doctrine, but of ethics. 'For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.' The doctrinal foundation that God is light and the moral, ethical foundation of love for one another are both at the heart of the apostolic gospel. The gospel is incomplete unless it includes both doctrine and ethics. Doctrine is of the essence of the gospel--doctrine about the character of God; about human sin; about the mediator, Jesus Christ, who is the God-man; about his life, death and resurrection to forgive the sins of his people and give them eternal life; about the need for personal response of faith to appropriate the work of Christ into one's own life. But it is equally true that the essence of the gospel includes the moral imperatives of repentance and of a new life of love lived under the Lordship of Christ and empowered by his Spirit. And any gospel you believe, any gospel you proclaim that does not include both doctrine and ethics is only half a gospel tragically incomplete, radically distorted, hopelessly deficient. Both doctrine and ethics are at the heart of the gospel because they are so inextricably linked. The character of God, who as light is wholly righteous, true and loving demands and empowers moral responses on the part of his children. Supremely these moral responses are to be ones of love. Our love for one another is demanded by the character of God but it is also empowered by the brightness of the God who is light and love, with whom there is no small print. Only when we see and believe and cherish the brightness of God will we be free to entrust ourselves and our futures into his hands. And then and only then will we be free to forget about ourselves in order to genuinely love someone else. Biblically speaking doctrine and ethics always go together. And in both cases, both in doctrine and in ethics, our need is not for something new. That's what the false teachers in John's day were trumpeting. They were the ones with the new revelations. They were the ones with the latest ideas. They were the ones who were modern, progressive "with-it". They were infatuated with newness. But according to John that isn't what we need at all. What we need, which is what his readers needed, is to go back to what we have heard from the beginning. John's command in 1Jn 2:24 applies to us in terms of ethics as well as doctrine 'Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you.'" ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))