

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!
ON
THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

Lesson Plan for Thursday – March 20, 2014

CONVERSATION #7 – “Love and Confidence”
I JOHN 3:11-24

Our objectives for this session:

- to share ideas, attitudes, and experiences relating to the message proclaimed by John; and, in doing so, strengthen our SAKLC fellowship;
- to understand what are meant by ‘*The Marks Of the Children of God;*’
- to distinguish between a ‘*lifestyle of love*’ and ‘*a lifestyle of hate;*’ through revisiting a story from the Old Testament;
- to explore what it means “*to confidently love*” others in our 21st century society.

AN OPENING PASTORAL PRAYER

FACILITATOR’S OVERVIEW OF TODAY’S CONVERSATION:

We find out what a tree is by observing its leaves and the fruit that it produces. We find out what a person is by her/his conduct. The conduct of the person of God is characterized by righteousness. *But, what is righteousness?* John’s message is that it is to love fellow human beings.

To love is *central* to Christianity; the writer of I John makes these five comments on its importance in everyday Christian living:

- (1) To become a Christian is to begin a life of love.
- (2) To love and not to hate is the proof of being a Christian.
- (3) Not to love is to become a murderer (cf. Matthew 5:21–22 “*You have heard that it was said to those who lived long ago, Don’t commit murder,*” and *all who commit murder will be in danger of judgment.*”²² *But I say to you that everyone who is angry with their brother or sister will be in danger of judgment. If they say to their brother or sister,*

'You idiot,' they will be in danger of being condemned by the governing council. And if they say, 'You fool,' they will be in danger of fiery hell.)

(4) Christ, our example, demonstrated what the life of love is (cf. **1 Peter 2:21** - ***You were called to this kind of endurance, because Christ suffered on your behalf. He left you an example so that you might follow in his footsteps.***).

(5) To love is to give unconditionally to the person who is in need.

A) THE SCRIPTURAL RECORD –I JOHN 3:11–18 “MARKS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD”

¹¹ This is the message that you heard from the beginning: love each other. ¹² Don't behave like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he kill him? He killed him because his own works were evil, but the works of his brother were righteous. ¹³ Don't be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have transferred from death to life, because we love the brothers and sisters. The person who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. ¹⁶ This is how we know love: Jesus laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ But if a person has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need and that person doesn't care—how can the love of God remain in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let's not love with words or speech but with action and truth. [COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE]

¹¹ For this is the message (the announcement) which you have heard from the first, that we should love one another,

¹² [And] not be like Cain who [took his nature and got his motivation] from the evil one and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his deeds (activities, works) were wicked and malicious and his brother's were righteous (virtuous).

¹³ Do not be surprised and wonder, brethren, that the world detests and pursues you with hatred.

¹⁴ We know that we have passed over out of death into Life by the fact that we love the brethren (our fellow Christians). He who does not love abides (remains, is ^[a]held and kept continually) in [spiritual] death.

¹⁵ Anyone who hates (abominates, detests) his brother [in Christ] is [at heart] a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding (persevering) within him.

¹⁶ By this we come to know (progressively to recognize, to perceive, to understand) the [essential] love: that He laid down His [own] life for us; and we ought to lay [our] lives down for [those who are our] brothers [in Him].

¹⁷ But if anyone has this world's goods (resources for sustaining life) and sees his brother [and fellow believer] in need, yet closes his heart of compassion against him, how can the love of God live and remain in him?

¹⁸ Little children, let us not love [merely] in theory or in speech but in deed and in truth (in practice and in sincerity). [THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE]

A REVIEW OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT:

1) In verse 12 there is a reference to Cain and Abel. (find that biblical account below:)

(GENESIS 4:1-9 - *The man Adam knew his wife Eve intimately. She became pregnant and gave birth to Cain, and said, "I have given life to a man with the LORD's help."* ²*She gave birth a second time to Cain's brother Abel. Abel cared for the flocks, and Cain farmed the fertile land.*

³*Some time later, Cain presented an offering to the LORD from the land's crops* ⁴*while Abel presented his flock's oldest offspring with their fat. The LORD looked favorably on Abel and his sacrifice* ⁵*but didn't look favorably on Cain and his sacrifice. Cain became very angry and looked resentful.* ⁶*The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why do you look so resentful?"* ⁷*If you do the right thing, won't you be accepted? But if you don't do the right thing, sin will be waiting at the door ready to strike! It will entice you, but you must rule over it."*

⁸*Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.*

⁹*The LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"*

Cain said, "I don't know. Am I my brother's guardian?"

- a) *What was the problem between the 2 boys?*
- b) *What caused Cain's anger?*
- c) *Look carefully @ verse 7 – What was God's solution to the problem?*
- d) *What happens if Cain disobeys God?*
- e) *John provides this illustration as a practical example of how to love one another. It is an intellectual decision to overcome an emotion. It is a rational choice to obey God and do what is right rather than obey self and give an opportunity for sin to take control.*

- 2) In **verses 14-15** the language that John uses suggests a *lifestyle of love*, vs. a *lifestyle of hate*. These are 2 extremes illustrate John's overall point. He is not referring to any single act or moment of emotion. Rather, John is describing a direction, in which one is either heading towards increasing love within the community of believers, or towards increasing hatred, leading ultimately to murder.
- 3) The passage, when taken as a whole, describes what typically occurs within community units (*starting with immediate family; then, moving upward to other units in society*). Considering the "statement of reality" in John 3:13, *should Christians in today's world expect anything less than hostility when they live true Christian lives? Does this mean we "throw in the towel" and let hostility continue? Do you see a mission here for the Christian and for the Church?*
- 4) Re-examine verses 13-15, then recall, the words in **1 Peter 2:21** (*SEE ABOVE IN THIS LESSON PLAN*)
- 5) In **verses 16-18**, John explains that the love he is discussing must result in acts of kindness and mercy towards others. These acts are evidence that will ease any concerns regarding salvation.
- 6) If love is not merely a matter of words or talk, how can it be effective in action when it is so difficult to know the true needs of people in contemporary society?

B) THE SCRIPTURAL RECORD | JOHN 3:19–20 "THE SUPREME TEST"

¹⁹ *This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts in God's presence.* ²⁰ *Even if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.* [COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE]

¹⁹ *By this we shall come to know* (perceive, recognize, and understand) *that we are of the Truth, and can reassure* (quiet, conciliate, and pacify) *our hearts in His presence,*

²⁰ *Whenever our hearts in* [^[e]tormenting] *self-accusation make us feel guilty and condemn us.* [For we are in God's hands.] *For He is above and greater than our consciences* (our hearts), *and He knows* (perceives and understands) *everything* [nothing is hidden from Him]. [THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE]

A REVIEW OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT:

- 1) Every Christian will always recognize that he/she is a sinner. However, she/he will also know that within the heart/mind there is love for God and other human beings. So she/he will rejoice that he/she is a child of God in whom is the love of God.

- 2) God sees and knows everything. He knows we are sinners but he also knows that in our hearts, by the presence of his Spirit, there is a measure of divine love.
- 3) Others can only judge us by what we say and do, but God sees the motivation in our hearts. **1 Kings 8:17–18** provides a good example of how God knows our hearts:

¹² *Then Solomon said, “The LORD said that he would live in a dark cloud, ¹³ but I have indeed built you a lofty temple as a place where you can live forever.”*

¹⁴ *The king turned around, and while the entire assembly of Israel was standing there, he blessed them, ¹⁵ saying, “Bless Israel’s God, the LORD, who spoke directly to my father David and now has kept his promise: ¹⁶ ‘From the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt I haven’t selected a city from any Israelite tribe as a site for the building of a temple for my name. But now I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.’ ¹⁷ My father David wanted to build a temple for the name of the LORD, Israel’s God. ¹⁸ “But the LORD said to my father David, ‘It is very good that you thought to build a temple for my name. [BEFORE GOD.....EVEN THOUGHTS COUNT!]*

C) THE SCRIPTURAL RECORD | JOHN 3:21–24 “THE INSEPARABLE COMMANDS”

²¹ *Dear friends, if our hearts don’t condemn us, we have confidence in relationship to God.*

²² *We receive whatever we ask from him because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. ²³ This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love each other as he commanded us. ²⁴ The person who keeps his commandments remains in God and God remains in him; and this is how we know that he remains in us, because of the Spirit that he has given to us. [COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE]*

²¹ *And, beloved, if our consciences (our hearts) do not accuse us [if they do not make us feel guilty and condemn us], we have confidence (complete assurance and boldness) before God,*

²² *And we receive from Him whatever we ask, because we [watchfully] obey His orders [observe His suggestions and injunctions, follow His plan for us] and [habitually] practice what is pleasing to Him.*

²³ *And this is His order (His command, His injunction): that we should believe in (put our faith and trust in and adhere to and rely on) the name of His Son Jesus Christ (the Messiah), and that we should love one another, just as He has commanded us.*

²⁴ *All who keep His commandments [who obey His orders and follow His plan, live and continue to live, to stay and] abide in Him, and He in them. [They let Christ be a home to them and they are the home of Christ.] And by this we know and understand and have the proof that He [really] lives and makes His home in us: by the [Holy] Spirit Whom He has given us. [THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE]*

A REVIEW OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT:

- 1) God is pleased when his people obey two commands. They believe on the name of Jesus Christ and they love one another.
- 2) To believe on the name of Jesus means to be committed to the nature and character of the person bearing the name;
- 3) The command to love one another is found in John 13:34. - ***“I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other.***
- 4) Right belief and right conduct should go together in the healthy Christian and church life.
- 5) It is not important that we possess some supernatural power to love others, but only that we agree with Jesus that this is what we should do. If we agree with Him, we will have no problem humbly asking for the power to love others as He has loved us. That is all we can do. That is all we need to do!
- 6) In the last analysis, the life of loving others is only possible when it is sustained by a total commitment to the Son of God.

FOR GROUP CONVERSATION:

1. Living in our permissive 21st century society, how can Christians be righteous and loving without becoming legalistic and even puritanical?
2. If love is not merely a matter of words or talk, how can it be effective in action when it is so difficult to know the true needs of people?
3. Why is a clear conscience so important? Why is it that we are to obey our consciences? (*Carefully re-read verses 19–21.*)
4. Why is “Christian doctrine” frequently not united to a committed love for others – both in individuals and in churches? What can be done to unite teaching and practice to achieve loving commitment?

THE FOCUS OF NEXT WEEK’S STUDY: I JOHN 4:1-21 “Walking in Love”