



## Daily Devotionals

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### 1 JOHN 3:11-18 WILL-BASED LOVE

*11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

*16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

When Jesus calls upon us to love, he calls us to action. In his beachside restitution of St. Peter, when the Apostle answers Jesus by saying he loves him, Jesus directs him to a specific action -- "Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). In his instruction to us through the Disciples, Jesus does likewise. "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15).

The kind of love that St. John wrote about was not the emotion to which we most often refer. Emotional love is a self-centered feeling focused on what the object of our attention does for us. Although such love can be useful in initiating a relationship, it cannot be the basis for a lasting relationship because it is subject to the daily fluctuations in how we feel. In Scripture, love is centered in the will and not in feelings, and that which is centered in the will is necessarily manifested in actions. It is the love that God has for humankind. All of Scripture can be read as a love story. God's acts in the world - revelation, deliverance, provision, sustenance, even chastening - center on the well-being of his creatures. Of course, the greatest act of God's love was the crucifixion of Jesus, by which we can be reconciled in our relationship with God. As recipients of such love, it is incumbent on us to also exhibit that love in our lives. If we are to love God as God loves us we must both enact that love by choice and choose to love those whom God loves. From experience we know that we are not often going to feel like it, rather we will have to will ourselves to do it.

Before you give up and say, "I can't do that," remember that God has also provided the means through which you can become a godly lover. The power to love with a godly love is available to us through the Holy Spirit. You are correct; you cannot love like God based on your human nature. But with God all things are possible. When you open yourself to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit the fruit is godly love.

**As you, Lord Christ, embraced me, a sinner, with your arms of love spread wide on the cross, may the arms of my will be extended to my neighbors. Empower me to act in love toward you and my neighbors so that my heart will follow and true godly love become the manner of my life. Make me your child as only you can and as a reflection of who you are. Amen.**