

Devotional Questions – 1 John 3:11-24

1. *How do Cain and Abel illustrate the two basic categories of humanity (1 John 3:11-15)?*
2. *Why is Christ's death on the cross the supreme example of love (1 John 3:16)?*
3. *In what practical ways might we 'lay down our lives' for each other (1 John 3:16)?*
4. *How is God's true love seen to be real in the believer (1 John 3:18)?*
5. *Why should our heart condemn us (1 John 3:19-20)?*
6. *The heart of man has always been a problem. When should we listen to it and when should we stop listening (1 John 3:20)?*
7. *Why would our obedience to God's commands affect our confidence in prayer (1 John 3:21-22)?*
8. *Why do you think John reduces the commandments to a single command to be obeyed (1 John 3:23-24)?*

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Answers to Questions

For detailed comments see Dr Ruckman's works¹.

Note: NIV corrupts this verse. 

Verses cited in this study that the NIV has corrupted are Romans 8:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, 1 Timothy 1:5, 1 John 3:16, four verses in total.

1. How do Cain and Abel illustrate the two basic categories of humanity (1 John 3:11-15)?

Those two groups are those whom God respects, typified by Abel and those whom God does not respect, typified by Cain i.e. saved and lost.

“...Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell” Genesis 4:2-5.

God would never respect an offering ***“of the fruit of the ground”*** because as God had said to Adam after the Fall ***“cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life”*** Genesis 3:17.


Though the sheep of Abel's flock had to eat from the ground, nevertheless ***“the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering”*** because Abel's offering incurred the shedding of blood and as God would later declare ***“For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”*** Leviticus 17:11 ***“and without shedding of blood is no remission”*** Hebrews 9:22.

That is why ***“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”*** Acts 4:12 because ***“...Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour”*** Ephesians 5:2.

God did have respect for the Lord's offering of Himself so that ***“now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ”*** Ephesians 2:13.

Therefore remember as with Cain and Abel and their respective offerings ***“that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”*** 1 Peter 1:18-19.

2. Why is Christ's death on the cross the supreme example of love (1 John 3:16)?

It is such because it is ***“the love of God”*** 1 John 3:16. 

What God does e.g. ***“commendeth his love toward us”*** Romans 5:8 is far ahead of what anyone else does and no-one can improve on it, as King Solomon and Paul explain.

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him” Ecclesiastes 3:14.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” Romans 5:6-8.

3. In what practical ways might we 'lay down our lives' for each other (1 John 3:16)?

- Interaction

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" Galatians 6:2.

- Intercession

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" Ephesians 6:18.

- Intervention

"The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain" 2 Timothy 1:16.

4. How is God's true love seen to be real in the believer (1 John 3:18)?

1 John 3:18 states **"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."**

1 John 3:18 may be fulfilled as follows.


- Keeping the Lord's words

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" 1 John 2:5.

- Manifesting the Lord's Son

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" 2 Corinthians 2:14.

- Fulfilling the Lord's purposes

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" Romans 8:28. 

5. Why should our heart condemn us (1 John 3:19-20)?

This can happen through succumbing to **"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"** Ephesians 2:2 and in turn for example manifesting in direct violation of scripture:

- A disobedient spirit

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" Romans 6:17.

- A miserly spirit

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" 2 Corinthians 9:7.

- An unforgiving spirit

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" Ephesians 4:32.


- A man-pleasing spirit


"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" Ephesians 6:5-6.

- A unruly spirit

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" Colossians 3:15.

- An impatient spirit

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" 2 Thessalonians 3:5. 

- An uncharitable spirit
“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” 1 Timothy 1:5. 
- A lustful spirit
“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” 2 Timothy 2:22.

6. *The heart of man has always been a problem. When should we listen to it and when should we stop listening (1 John 3:20)?*

See *Question 5*. The heart may be listened to when it identifies spiritual disobedience as listed above and urges obedience **“by the grace of God”** 1 Corinthians 15:10 to the scriptures. That will be when the Lord’s exhortation to establish **“an honest and good heart”** has been obeyed. **“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience”** Luke 8:15.

The heart should not be listened to but instead re-made **“honest and good”** by means of Luke 8:15 when it promotes the evils **“from within”** 13 in all against which the Lord warned. **“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man”** Mark 7:21-23.

7. *Why would our obedience to God’s commands affect our confidence in prayer (1 John 3:21-22)?*

The man that the Lord cured of blindness explains why and John explains why later in his letter. **“Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth”** John 9:31. Note that the Pharisees **“cast him out”** John 9:34, 35 but did not contradict or refute his statement in John 9:31.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” 1 John 5:14-15. Confidence in prayer depends on *abiding in* and ensuring that prayer is *uttered in “the will of God”* because that is how the Lord Jesus Christ prays effectively even when it had to be a case of **“not my will, but thine, be done”** Luke 22:42, which is also the standard for today’s believer.

“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” John 5:30.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” John 15:7.

“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” Romans 8:27.

8. *Why do you think John reduces the commandments to a single command to be obeyed (1 John 3:23-24)?*

Paul explains why. To **“love one another”** 1 John 3:23 is to **“fulfil the law of Christ”** Galatians 6:2 in all respects for one another. **“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law”** Romans 13:8.

References

All web references were current at the time of writing. See shop.timefortruth.co.uk/ruckman.html for Dr Ruckman’s books.

¹ store.kjv1611.org/

The Books of the General Epistles Volume 2 by Dr Peter S. Ruckman, pp 104-112
Ruckman Reference Bible pp 9-10, 1636