

LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

STUDY FIVE

The Believer's Badge

1 John 2:7–11

How important to remember John's words that love for others is an old and ever-relevant message! It's also a new and Christ-related command, and it reveals the darkness of hidden hatred. This passage is all about how we treat our brothers and sisters.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THREE simple words form one of the most important and most beloved phrases in our language: *I love you*. According to Chuck Swindoll, we thrive on expressions of love:

The truth is, we never outgrow these words, never get tired of them, never find a substitute for them. We say, “I love you,” and demonstrate our love in many different ways. Expressions of love are the lifeblood of relationships. Without love, a marriage or a family will shrivel and die.¹

In fact, without love, no one can live an authentically Christian life. John initially focused his short letter on walking in the light “as God is in the light” (1 John 1:7). Then, he sharpened his focus on obedience, saying, “those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him” (2:5). In the passage for this study, John described the practical outcome of those who walk in the light and obey God’s Word: loving one another.

Love is the mark of the true follower of Christ—the badge of the believer. In Jesus’ day, the disciples of the Pharisees were identified by their religious garb and doctrine. But Jesus said to His followers, “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:35). And, as we’ll discover, the love we share is not just human love but the love of Christ.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Consider how Christ's love heals downtrodden spirits, amends erroneous thinking, and corrects unloving actions. Now, think over the ways Christ shines His love on you.

We *follow* Christ by reflecting His love to others. Give thanks for His love toward you. Invite His Spirit to guide your study of His Word and help you imitate His love for others.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

We begin this study with two events that John had in mind when he wrote 1 John 2:7–11.² The first occurred when Moses delivered instruction at the foot of Mount Sinai. The second occurred when Jesus uttered a new command while washing the feet of His disciples.

Based on these two events, John claimed that the command to love one another (1 John 2:10) was both old and new. However, as you will see, Jesus's new command reveals a change—not in the essential nature of love but in the degree. Let's take a closer look.

Moses at the Foot of Mount Sinai

We find the old command in the often-dusty book of Leviticus. Brush it off and read [Leviticus 19:17–18](#). Summarize the main point. What measurement is used to determine the extent of love?



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The old one is the old Mosaic commandment, which is a duty, and you do this as you love yourself. Your love for others is about how much you love yourself. So yourself becomes the standard. —Chuck Swindoll

Jesus at the Feet of His Disciples

We find the new command when Jesus girded himself with a towel to wipe the dust off the feet of the disciples. Read [John 13:1–17, 31–38](#). Jesus said the new command is that we are to “love one another.” What is now the new measurement for this ancient command? How is this new standard different and why is it important?

This is a Christ-like love, agape love, that doesn't wait for the response of another. It doesn't need another's response. This is a one-directional love, doing what is best for the other person. It's a sacrificial love. It is a love that has no limits and no selfishness. Self is out of the picture, and your focus is on what is best for the other person. The standard in this case is Christ Himself. —Chuck Swindoll

Taken at face value, John 13 depicts a man wiping off the feet of other men—such a common event that is easy for us to forget. But not for John. After six decades he never forgot how that servantly act portrayed such cosmic meaning. Christ the Lord proved the extent of His love by not only serving His disciples but also by dying for the sins of the world.

Always remember the *extent* and *proof* of Christ's love for you. Regarding extent, it is impossible for God to love you more than He already does. He loves you to the uttermost. Regarding proof, God proved His love at Calvary. “God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:8). There's no greater proof than Christ's death on the cross.



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Observation: The True Light Is Already Shining

Now we turn to our primary passage, *1 John 2:7–11*. Read through it now. Use at least two translations. Chuck likes the New Living Translation (which adds explanatory phrasing for clarity) and the New American Standard Bible (which stays closer to the word order and exact wording of the original languages for accuracy).

In *1 John 2:1*, John wrote “my children” as a diminutive in Greek—like we might call a cat, “kitty.” He did so to express affection, not condescension. How did John reemphasize his warm affection for his readers in 2:7?

Now observe *1 John 2:7–8*. What characteristics did John ascribe to the “old” aspect of the commandment?

What characteristics did John ascribe to the “new” aspect of the command? What imagery did he associate with this command?



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In 1 John 2:7–8, we see how John drew from two events to emphasize the dual nature of the command to love one another. The command, though old, always proves to be ever relevant. We rarely *don't* have an opportunity to love others.

Christ, however, makes the command new—*kainos*, in Greek, which means “fresh.” Christ’s new command has a fresh quality because it centers on His person and the love He demonstrates toward us. *How deep it is!*



Interpretation: Love One Another

John wrote that this new command is “true in Him and in you” (1 John 2:8 NASB). What did he mean? (For help with the answer to this question and the questions to follow, you can consult Chuck’s [commentary on 1 John](#), if you own a copy. For an online resource, [Constable’s Notes](#) at NetBible.org can also guide your answers.)

Also, what did John mean when he wrote, “The true Light is already shining” (1 John 2:8 NASB)? Where do we see this light today, and how do we know it to be the true light?



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In 1 John 2:9–10, John gave positive traits about those who follow the command. What are these traits?

Christian love is all about how we treat our brothers and sisters. Nothing else communicates that a person is an authentic Christian like when he or she loves others. Nothing else shines a light brighter in this dark world and communicates the truth of Christ like when we love one another as He loved us.



Chuck's Commentary Insight

First John Theme: Darkness

Because of the dawning of this new light, the life of the genuine Christ-follower should reveal and drive out the darkness of hatred (2:9). Something's wrong when a person claims to be in the Light, having become a true child of God through faith in the Lord Jesus, but then they still seethe with enmity, hostility, bitterness, and prejudice against fellow believers in the body of Christ. That person still lives in the realm of darkness. John seems to leave no room for "neutral ground" or a "gray area." It's either light or dark . . . love or hate.³

In 1 John 2:11, John gave negative traits about those who do not follow the command. What are those traits?



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How remarkable to think of the way Jesus transforms the way we love others. His Spirit drives out the hidden darkness of hatred and gives us new light to live by. A deeper sense of compassion and empathy just overwhelms our minds and hearts in ways we never thought possible until we came to Christ. This perspective and these feelings give us only a foretaste of our Savior's love for us.



Correlation: Brotherly Love

Paul, too, wrote often of love. *Romans 12:9–21* masterfully encapsulates Christ's teaching on loving one another. Read these verses. What did Paul emphasize, and how does this passage complement what you learned about love in 1 John 2:7–11?

God did not give us a manual for achieving a great name in the eyes of the world. We possess no instructions for building revered kingdoms or towering fortunes or walls of accolades. Instead, God gave us the way of achieving a great name in the eyes of heaven. Such a way is not only more excellent and gratifying, it is also the way that will abide.



Application: Abide in the Light

Sometimes, the best application comes by way of meditation. Not emptying the mind but filling it. Let the truth of God's Word stir your imagination and attract your heart.



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Craft a simple picture of your life as if you were walking in darkness, without the light of truth or the love of Christ. Then contrast it with a picture as if you were walking in the light. List the consequences of walking in the darkness as well as the benefits of walking in the light?

Next, think of one person you know who once walked in the light but now chooses to live in darkness. Pray for that person. Know that God—according to His will—can inspire that person to do an about-face back toward the light. Never give up knocking on your Heavenly Father's door, entreating Him in prayer.

After Jesus dipped His disciples' feet in water and dried them with a towel, He did not command them to wear a gold cross around their necks, or print their baptismal certificates, or join four church committees. He told them simply to follow His example and love as He loved. Love lets the world know we belong to Jesus. Love is the believer's badge.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how deep is Your love for us. I open my heart to let Your love do its healing and purifying work in me. I don't want to harbor any secrets. I don't want to act in hatred. I don't want to cause any stumbling. I want my every move to come from Your impulse of love so that Your Son, love incarnate, might be honored in my life and cherished through my life. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 45.
2. To review Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org. If you do not have Chuck's *Living Insights* commentary on 1 John in your library, *grab a copy* at the Insight for Living Ministries web store.
3. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, 46.

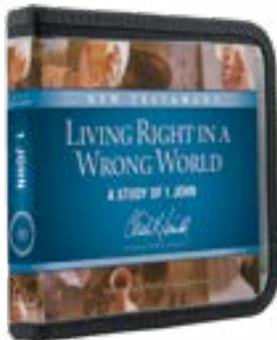


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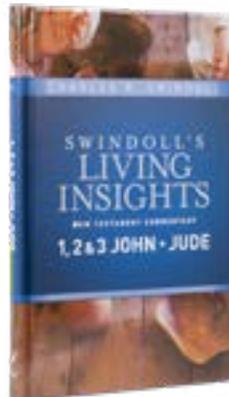
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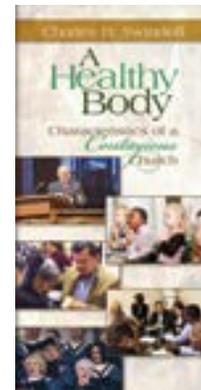
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

