

## **“SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OLD.”**

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**Scripture Texts: I John 2:7-11**

### **Introduction.**

Picture yourself in a classroom taking a test and you open the test booklet and there's one essay question. The question is do you know God? That's it, do you know God? Oh, and it says, give three examples. What would you begin writing?

Life is that test. Life is a test of whether we know God or not.

John puts this test out there; do we know God and he gives three ways to know or test whether we know God or not.

Last time we had the moral test of whether we do we know God, whether we are in Christ, and Christian, by keeping the commandments of God, by keeping His Word.

In a couple of weeks, we will come to the theological test, a test the false teachers are failing.

This week we have the social test of whether we know God, whether we are in Christ, and Christian, do we love our brother, our neighbor.

### **The Old New Commandment.**

Last time John wrote about keeping the commandments. This week he talks about one specific commandment, but he sounds a bit confusing, is it an old commandment or a new commandment? He says the answer is yes.

The commandment is implied in our text but made clear in other parts of John's letter. It is the commandment to brotherly love, to love one another.

**II John 1:5** ... not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another.

If you know God, you will keep His commandments and if you keep His commandments you will love your brother. This is the commandment, which in some sense is old and in some sense is new.

***On the one hand***, this is nothing new. This is the same rule for life found in the OT. Love your neighbor. Love one another. This is basic Christianity 101, love one another and so show you love God.

In the next chapter of I John he mentions Cain and Abel where there was a failure of the love test. The command to love one another is very old.

John also says it is a commandment you have heard. It is also old in the sense that it was taught by Christ from the beginning of the Gospel, which they have heard since they came to faith. When you first heard the Gospel, what did you hear? “Love one another even as I have loved you.”

The Gospel is not a new or recent teaching like some of the teaching of the false teachers.

***On the other hand***, John says this is a new commandment. He is remembering back to the words of Jesus that he wrote in his Gospel.

**John 13:34-35** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

It's new in that it never grows old, it is always new, fresh, real, relevant. It is old yet contemporary. It is new yet an ancient truth.

***It's new in quality and character.*** Jesus is the new standard of what love is and what it looks like. No one has ever loved the way He loved.

***It's new in extent.*** To the Jew you didn't have to love your enemy or Gentiles or sinners. Jesus extended love to our enemies, to Gentiles and to sinners.

This commandment finds its fullest and ultimate definition and example in Jesus.

***It's new in length.*** At the cross we see the lengths to which Jesus goes to love, He lays down His life.

***It's new in power.*** Not only is it in Jesus but it is in those in whom Jesus dwells, the life and love of Jesus in us.

**I John 2:8** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, *which is true in him* and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is *already* shining.

Jesus called us to be the light of the world, and our light shines in our love for each other.

**I John 3:14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.

In other words, love is the evidence of eternal life in us, and eternal life in us is a gift of God.

Only by having the life of Jesus in us can we truly love our brother.

**II Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Being Christian changes everything and changes how we love and who we love.

### **Can we pass the love test?**

That's the commandment, now the test. Have you been listening, have you been taking notes, do you get it, are you ready to apply it, to see if it has sunk in.

Are we keeping the love commandment? Are we saying or are we doing? John is saying that just saying doesn't cut it. Just talking doesn't pass the test.

***There are two tests here really, a hate test and a love test.***

In the moral test John contrasted the talkers versus the walkers.

In this social test John contrasts the haters versus the lovers.

Haters are like talkers, they say they love but they don't.

John uses strong language here, pretty blunt. We bristle at it. We wish there was maybe some middle ground here between love and hate, not just either or. Maybe tolerance.

If you hate your brother ***four things*** are true about you.

***First***, you are in darkness (spiritual death).

**Second**, you walk (live) in darkness.

**Third**, you do not know where you are going (stumbling).

**Fourth**, you are blind. You don't even see what's wrong or what your eternal future is.

Hate can't see straight, it makes you misjudge, misinterpret, you can't believe anything good about them, everything about them confirms your worst suspicions.

Remember back and our study of the book of Esther. Remember the blinding hatred that Haman had toward Mordecai, it made him so blind he couldn't see straight. He was so blind that his evil plot killed him.

Jesus put this in a story once. A man who was in serious trouble went to his master and begged forgiveness and mercy and his master gave it, forgiving an impossible debt. But then that man saw another servant who owed him a small sum, he demanded to be repaid immediately. The second servant begged forgiveness but the first wouldn't give it. Jesus said the man who doesn't forgive will not be forgiven. The man who hates is not in the light.

It is a lie to say we know God if we ourselves are not loving and forgiving. An unforgiving heart breeds hatred, bitterness, grudges, offenses, malice.

Are you angry, hateful, bitter, critical, sharp tongued, rude, irritable, resentful? Are you self-centered, envious, jealous, selfish, unloving? All of this is proof you don't know God or love God. You have failed the love test.

***The good news of the Gospel*** is that by grace though we were once blind now we can see, though we once hated, now we can love. Love sees straight because love is in the light.

Love does no wrong, no harm, no injury, no lies, slander, gossip, criticism. Love does good, it blesses, helps, comes along side, speaks well of, makes allowances for.

It puts others first.

It does not judge.

It bears other's burdens.

It forgets offenses and fault.

It shows hospitality.

It forgives again and again.

It treats others the way God treats us.

Jesus said, as I have loved you, so in the same manner and measure, you love others.

What you desire for yourself, desire for others.

Do unto others as you would have them do for you.

Think about what makes you happy, what makes you joyful, and think about how you can give that to others. You like praise, you like compliments, you like encouragement, you like gifts, you like what helps and lightens the load and gives peace. Share that, give that.

What you seek for yourself, seek to give to others. As you pursue your own happiness, pursue others happiness. Seek it with the same energy and creativity.

**I John 4:7** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

To love each other is the very heart of Christianity, the very heart of salvation, the very heart of how to live the Christian life.

Love others, remembering that they don't deserve it any more than you deserve Christ's love for you. You don't deserve His love at all, but He freely gives it. Others don't deserve your love, but freely give it anyway. It shows our love for Jesus and that our love is Christ-like.

### **Implications and application.**

We are sinners, so we often fail the love test. But one of the ways we can retake the love test when we fail is by asking for and giving forgiveness. That is how love is restored and we are reconciled.

This is a call to daily progress. This is a call to striving every day to let love be on our minds.

*Love is supernatural* and bears the marks of not being of this world but from beyond this world, from God and like God.

*Love grows.* In Scripture love is never static, it is growing and increasing.

**I Thessalonians 3:11-13** May the Lord make you *increase and abound in love* for one another.

**Philippians 1:9** It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more.

Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is like the sun. We are like the moon we are to reflect the light of the world back to the world. As we grow in Christ and as Christ grows in us that light grows from a quarter moon to a half moon to a full moon in brightness.

Do you want to be a more loving person? Do you want to get along better with difficult people? Do you want to improve your relationships with those around you and those you care about?

Do what Paul did, pray for it. Pray that God will make your love increase.

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to do a transforming work in you, to reveal and remove the obstacles, to increase your love for God and others.

Consider how you can go out into this week to grow in love and show love.

Consider how God has made us into a church family and how we can love each other better in our words and actions.

Consider how you can love someone who is lost. Love reaches out.

**I John 4:7** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.

**I John 4:11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

**Prayer:** Almighty and merciful God, we exult and praise you for the greatness of your love and for the incredible reflection of that love in Your Son. We rejoice at your gift. Grant that in our own brokenness, anxiety, doubts and fears we may live our lives as a reflection of the Lamb of God, in meekness and humility, in sacrifice and service, in willingness to give in love. May the love of the Lamb make our faith in Christ unshakable, our witness more bold, our love more unconditional.