

is that the extent of our responsibility to our siblings in Christ?
“Hey, if you ever need someone to die in your place, give me a call!” Is God only concerned that we are willing to die physically for our brothers and sisters as Christ died physically for the world?

When John said, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers*, the original language carried the idea of more than going out in a blaze of glory: it referred to a lifetime of sacrificial service—of laying *down our lives for the brothers*.

1JN 3.17-18 ~ *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

We are to *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* (**GL 6.2**) *We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”* (**RM 15.1-3**)

B.ILL—Macedonian churches (Paul traveled place to place gathering money for the Christians suffering from famine; Macedonian churches gave beyond their ability)

LOVE/Sacrifice/Time=Money

V. Conclusion

John's point in this passage is that, if we have the resources, and we see a legitimate need in the life of a brother or sister in the Lord, but we close our hearts to that need, then we are not showing love for our brothers and sisters in Christ; we are heading in the way of Cain; we are not real Christians—just mere substitutes. When we do not reflect love in our souls, resign ourselves to a life of sacrifice and service, and take responsibility for our siblings in Christ, we are just Diet Christians. It's like Mark Twain said: **“It's not the parts of the Bible I don't understand that bother me, it's the parts I do understand!”** Truly, this is a hard saying! Let us all try to be more like the Christian men and women that God desires us to be. Let us all this week think about one area where God would want us to make some sacrifice, and then take the steps to do it. Maybe there's someone in this congregation who has been overlooked or neglected. Maybe there is someone who needs special help or encouragement. We cannot do everything, but we can do something!

VI. Invitation

#106 [Ex-NT-E][BE 800]
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True Christianity

Txt: 1JN 3.10-18

PC X Pchd **CH; BL – 05/18/2025**

TRN 2 1JN 3

I. Introduction

ILL—**Diet Products** (everyone's on one; Diet Pepsi's highest seller; no-sugar sugar; diet dog treats!) Whether its sugar-free juice or fat-free brownies it seems that we have become a society that thrives on substitutes. **A hundred years from now, will there even be non-diet products? Or will the substitutes have taken over?**

None of the diet products are as good as the originals. Whether it is the aftertaste of a diet soda or the cardboard-ish texture of a diet-brownie, there is no comparison. Yet, these diet products are still selling! **Why?** Given enough time, the aftertaste isn't as noticeable; even the cardboard diet brownie becomes acceptable. After enough time, our palate becomes so used to the substitute that we cannot stomach the original anymore. When it comes to a diet product this is a good thing. However, when this process is mimicked in other areas of life, it leads to disaster.

ILL—**Sims 2** (people simulator; amazingly addictive; you cannot just marry someone—you have to move in, then propose, then get married). Just like diet soda, people have come to accept living together as a natural substitute for marriage. In fact, in the game, you gain no advantage by being married as opposed to living together! All of these things are symptoms of the fact that the world has accepted infatuation, fascination, and sex as substitutes for true love.

This attitude has reached the church. Some substitute Christianity for mere attendance. There is so much more to true, unsubstituted, non-diet Christianity than this. Jesus gave His disciples a litmus test to prove whether someone was a true disciple. **JN 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. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

LOVE/For the Brethren/New Sweden

Years later as the church was beset by false teachers, these words returned to the mind of John. John wrote that true, unsubstituted, non-diet Christianity will not be shown simply through how religious one was, but through love, and that love's **reflection of our souls, resignation to sacrifice, and responsibility to our siblings.**

II. Love's Reflection on our Soul—vs. 10-15

1JN 3.10-15 ~ *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice*

righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

John tells the story of Cain and Abel; a story that I imagine would have been familiar to all the congregation whether they were of a Jewish or Gentile background. These two men had much in common. They had a similar upbringing, they believed and worshiped the same God, they were brothers! Yet there was a significant difference between these two men: Abel had a **love** for God **reflected in his soul**—he was a righteous man. Cain, however, did not have that love for his God or his brother, and he became the first murderer.

But why would he kill his own brother? It was not because he stole his girlfriend or because he shirked out of some IOU. It was because, when they went to present their offerings to God, Abel's was accepted and Cain's was rejected. Ultimately, Cain was angry because his brother was more righteous than he was.

ILL—Crime of Passion (on TV and newspapers; crime committed in fit of rage; anger & jealousy flames out of control; unspeakable violence) When speaking of Cain's murder of his own brother, the word used to describe the act carries the idea of **“butcher”** or **“slaughter”**. Cain did not poison his brother with arsenic nor did he merely smother him with a pillow. He committed a brutal and violent murder—a “crime of passion”

Qj: But why would John encourage his readers to not be like Cain? Did he think they were all going to kill their brothers? Not exactly. But he could not deny that they had hatred in their hearts for one another.

MT 5.21-24 ~ *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before*

the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

ILL—Mealworms (each had one as a pet; kept in cornflakes; watched as it passed from egg-larva-pupa-adult; an egg, if left alone, eventually becomes full-grown mealworm). That's the point that Jesus was making here! Anger is murder in its larval form. If it continues on its natural progression, hatred will always lead to murder! John is telling us that we need to choose love instead of hate!

III. Love's Resignation to Sacrifice—vs. 16

Qj: But what does that mean? How can we show love reflected in our souls? I could give a big rambling list of “don'ts”—don't hold grudges against one another; don't be impatient with one another—but that's not what John does. Instead of focusing on what not to do, John focuses on what should be the result of **love: a resignation to sacrifice.**

IJN 3.16 ~ *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*

This is where love becomes a little difficult for some of us. We like to place the responsibility of peace and love in other people's hands. We want others to love us, but we don't show love for them. We call for world peace, but are not peacemakers in our own lives. We don't want to be the ones to sacrifice.

LOVE/For the Brethren/Linus

LOVE/Put into Practice/Lewis, C.S.

It is so easy to say that that you love someone. **But when the chips are down, and real pain and sacrifice is called for, do we really put love into practice in our own lives?** John's point is that Jesus did. He “laid down” his life willingly so that we could have forgiveness for our sins and therefore, He stands as the example for the impact that love ought to have on our service.

ILL—Shooting Death (someone came up, said “I love you,” and shot himself—nuts; if he jumped in the path of a bullet for you and said “I love you”—he really did) The importance isn't just that Jesus died; it is that He died in our place!

AP: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. This is not merely a command. John is saying that the natural progression of the gospel of Christ in our lives should be to recognize what God has done for us and to desire to do the same for others! The goal that we ought to strive for is to have the same kind of love that Jesus had for all of us!

IV. Love's Responsibility to our Siblings—vs. 17-18

John encouraged all Christians to let **love reflect in their souls**—to have the same type of **sacrificial love** that Jesus had for all of us. **But**