



We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

1 John 3:14

By This We Know

Precision is not always easily accessible in the ponderous pontifications of John. He often delves into the deeper realms of God's glory, at the furthest reaches of coherent thought and language. But in the same breath, he returns with a cold, sharp snap to the simplest reality.

"We should love one another," he says. Here, here! But have you met "one another". It's very difficult to accept the behavior of many—if not most—people that you'll encounter on a given day. We must remember that this comes after the refreshing refrain:

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him.

Considering the magnitude of the gift of God's love beggars the imagination. The "we" John speaks of is the clan of kids who know their Father's love. "The world" is out from which they were called.

Now distinct from all the commonplace anger and hate, and greed and envy, lust and violence, God's children are marked out by their God-likeness. We of all people, John is saying, should love one another. If we who are loved so thoroughly can't do it, who can?

John proceeds to declare love for one another not only as imperative, but definitive.

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We could call this John's razor, he's tried to state it several different ways, but always with the same simplistic severity. But to read it simply as a judgment is to miss the narrow path.

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

John points to the path paved by Jesus, the rut the cross created: love unto death. By this we know.



Love in action
sets God's
children apart.

Love in action means following Jesus' example, and living out his commands.

- How does love in action set God's children apart from the world?
- What are the consequences (positive or negative) of being set apart?

Love in action
assures us of
eternal life.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

1 John 3:14

- What does it mean to love the brethren? How do you look for opportunities to do this in your life?

Love in action
assures us that
we're of the truth.

And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

1 John 3:19

- What does it mean to be "of the truth"?
- Is your heart assured before him?