



## Sermon Notes from 12 January

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### Radically Shaped by Love (1 John 3:11-18)

by Pastor GL Wong

The church is a family where people love one another with agape love. We look to 1 John (a letter written by the Apostle John) in the Bible to see how we can attain such love. John uses the test of love to seek out genuine believers; their understanding of (agape) love is uniquely different from the world's.

3 key insights for you to be radically shaped by agape love

#### **1) The contrast with agape love**

1 John 3:11 – Jesus had taught in His ministry to love one another. John used an extreme and shocking contrast to help people understand what agape love should look like. This contrast of agape love and murder (Cain's act of murder in v12) teaches us that agape love is the radical actionable opposite of murder. Agape love is more than a feeling, it is actionable. It begins from love in the heart and overflows into action; the opposite of murder, which begins with hatred from the heart and overflows into murder. Agape love is radical action that reflects love just as murder is radical action that reflects hatred. Agape love is radical; it is as radically selfless as murder is radically selfish. True agape love proves itself by deed (v18). In the same way murder captures people's attention in the most negatively shocking way, agape love in deed and in truth is meant to capture people's attention in the most positively surprising way. See agape love as radical selfless acts from the heart that are life-giving!

#### **2) The shift into agape love**

Agape love is very different from the values of this world. John was preparing Christians for persecution they would face (v13). God's people are called to love. John echoes a new commandment that Jesus had given – to love one another (John 13:34) and uses it as a test to identify true Christians. Agape love for one another is not just a new command from God; it flows from a new capacity given by

God. Life is co-related to love, just as death is co-related to hatred (vv14-15). Agape love is the result of a new capacity from God given through grace. This capacity to love is God-given, just as new life for a believer is God-given. God commands us based on this new capacity He has given. The shift from hatred into agape love mirrors the shift from death into life (1 Thess. 4:9). The emphasis of love for fellow believers is a result of a shift in spiritual family. The shift from hatred into agape love mirrors the shift from being a child of the Devil to being a child of God. By grace through faith, He adopts the children of the Devil (John 8:44) as His very own, despite the seed of evil in our hearts from the Devil. This newfound status gives all of God's children a joy that nothing in this world can take away (1 John 3:1). As God's children, we receive more rights from Him than any wrongs we could possibly receive from the entire hateful world combined. Such is the joy of being a child of God!

#### **3) The knowing of agape love**

True knowledge of agape love is attained only through the coming of Jesus Christ, who gave His life on the cross to save us from our sins (v16). Jesus lovingly laid down His life for us. His blood is the cry of mercy through the fulfilment of God's demand of justice (Heb. 12:24). It is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that enables us to make critical shifts: from hatred to agape love, from death to eternal life, from being a child of the devil to a child of God.

Those who have received the love of God through the life laid down for them go on to do the same (v16). The gospel turns Devil-like murderers who cry 'your life for mine' into Christ-like martyrs who cry 'my life for yours'. Let God open the eyes of our hearts to show compassion, just as Jesus Christ did for us (v17)!