

INTRODUCTION 引言

Love is a choice. Sometimes, it comes with a huge price. Chad Arnold's story is an illustration of self-sacrifice. He suffered from an incurable liver disease. Organ transplant might be the only hope for him. However, there was a long waiting list for donors, and the doctor estimated that Chad might only have months to live. Instead of getting a liver from a deceased person, another option will be getting a chunk of tissue from a live donor. The organ in both the recipient and the donor will eventually grow back to a normal size. Family members and friends went through tests to see if they were a good match. It turned out that two siblings of Chad were the perfect candidates. Ryan, the youngest brother wanted to help. Chad objected to the offer. Ryan replied: "You would do the same to me, wouldn't you?" Fast forward to the day of surgery. Everything went well. Chad had significant improvements almost immediately. Ryan felt fine at first. However, he went into a cardiac arrest later, then a coma. He passed away two days afterward. Chad has a deep sense of gratitude for Ryan, mixed with grief and guilt. He determined to live on to make Ryan's sacrifice count. One person died but the other one survives. Jesus chose to die so that all who believe in Him will have eternal life. It is more than a model of love that motivates us to follow. It is a command the Lord gave us. Love should be a signature for Jesus' followers. John captures that principle by two "we know" statements. He says in verse 14: **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers...** To demonstrate love proves our new life in Jesus. John also states in verse 19: **By this we shall know that we are of the truth...** Loving others is to practice our new nature as redeemed people. We will love others if we are loved by God. Love should not only be a feeling; it should also come with actions.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Proves Our New Life 新生命的證明 (v. 11-15)

First of all, love proves our new life. It shows that we have been transformed from a dead soul to a new creation. John explains that by using the negative example of Cain. Cain had no love for his own brother. The story is recorded in Genesis 4. Cain was mad because God accepted the offering from his brother Abel but not his. It was not because Abel presented animals and Cain presented crops. Unlike some of us, God is not a carnivore! Hebrews 11:4 explains: **By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain...** Abel presented a sacrifice out of faith. He did not worry that he would suffer a loss by giving back to God first. Abel even gave God the best. The Genesis passage says Abel gave the fat portions from the firstborn of his flock. Cain was upset because God showed favor to Abel's offering. God warned Cain to examine his intent, or else sin would overpower him. Cain did not listen. Anger thus escalated to become hatred. Uncontrollable hatred turned into murder. Cain killed his own brother because there was no love. John comments that Cain belonged to the evil one because he did an evil act. Such hostility is widespread in the fallen world. The author cautions us in verse 13: **Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.** Why does the world hate Christians? Jesus tells us in John 15:19 – **"If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."** The world

will hate you if you belong to Jesus. The world hates what we believe because truth condemns sin. For example, God creates life and therefore Christians uphold the sanctity of life. However, some non-believers advocate that they have the right to destroy life. Either the Bible is right or they are right. There is no neutral ground or gray area. The world tries to come up with an alternative model that supports its views. At the end, the world will resort to hatred when it cannot stand against the truth. John reminds us, however, hatred has no place in the house of God. He says in verse 14: **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.** By saying “brothers” it also include sisters. We must love members of the faith community. Before you say that you love the homeless people in the city or refugees in another country, you have to love those in our church first. The word “love” here is in continuous tense. It means that loving others should be our instinct. It is expressed naturally without thinking. We should not follow the examples of Cain and the world to hate others. Otherwise, it indicates that we are still dead in sin and do not have eternal life. None of us will vent our anger by killing people. But in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says getting mad at others is the same as killing them. That is a serious matter! We dare not to kill others with a weapon. But we can kill them in our hearts. Do you reject the things some people do no matter how good the results are because you do not like them? Are you critical of those who hold different views? We kill others in our mind, and we can do so with our lips too. Do you make up stories and slander people rather than checking out the facts? Do you find fault at others and belittle them? Let love be the trademark of our church. May God fill our hearts with His love, so that we will speak with kindness and gentleness. We resist any evil suspicion toward others, and do not come to a conclusion until we find out the whole story. We accept different opinions, if those ideas are not contrary to the Bible. We graciously correct people if their words and actions are inconsistent with the truth. We must hate sin but love people like God does.

2. Practices Our New Nature 新性情的操練 (v. 16-20)

To love others proves our new life. Secondly, it is also a way to practice our new nature. John says in verse 19: **By this we shall know that we are of the truth...** Those who know the truth must love people truthfully. Previously, John quotes Cain as a negative example. Now, he uses Jesus as the perfect example of love. John relates Jesus’ love for us and our love for others in verse 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.** Our Lord loves us unconditionally, sacrificially and completely. His followers must do the same for fellow believers. Before we apply that principle, let us ponder what kind of people Jesus died for. Romans 5:8 gives us the answer: **But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Jesus died for sinners. At that time we were still rebellious in sin. We intentionally chose to do wrong. We had no idea that we offended God. Moreover, we were lost in sin. We did not know that the Heavenly Father was waiting for us to come home. Jesus redeems you not because you are better than others but because He shows mercy to you. We must treat others with the same kind of love. John challenges us in verse 17: **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?** The phrase “closes his heart” literally means “shuts off his gut.” To the Jews, the gut is the origin of compassion. Gospel writers describe Jesus was “churning in His gut” when He saw people suffering. Such emotion motivates Him to help them. The situation John mentions here is achievable. You have the resources to help the needy brother. It is not like he owes a million-dollar debt and you do not have the money to lend

to him. John states that God's love cannot remain in us if we refuse to help. The phrase "God's love" can be interpreted in two ways. First, it means our love for God. John mentions in chapter 4 that we cannot say we love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brothers and sisters we can see. Second, the phrase can also be understood as God's love in us. It is hard for God to fill us with His love if we withhold our love for others. We clog up the flow of God's grace. Recently, we are studying the life of Abram. God blessed Abram because He intended to bless others through him. The same is true for us. My wife and I are blessed by many of you the past few weeks when she injured her wrist. You showed care with kind words, prayers and food. Your food saved us a lot of time from cooking. I was grateful to God for His love through you every time I ate. Loving others begins with knowing where the needs are. It is not to gossip about others but you show genuine care to them. You do not only agree to pray for them, but you pray with them on the spot. You share your time and possessions with needy people. May the Lord motivate us to spread His love to others in tangible ways. You love people with a pure heart because God loves you first. They may not appreciate your good works. They may forget your kindness. They may even suspect your intent. You cannot control people's reaction. You can only decide whether or not to show love. God will bless you when you do so with a clear conscience. He will remember your effort even when no one sees it. Let love not only be an adjective or a noun, but also a verb. We do not just talk about love but we also carry out love.

CONCLUSION 結論

Love should not only be a feeling; it should also come with actions. All our life we are told to protect ourselves: it is my rights, my preferences, my opinions, my feelings, my time and my properties. We make it a big deal when we are taken advantage of. Our instinct causes us to argue, defend and even pay back to show that we are right and others are wrong. It will be hard for us to love others unless there is a shift of mentality. Jesus sets up an example of self-sacrifice. He would not have come into the world if He puts Himself first. Instead, He said: "My mission is to accomplish the will of My Father." He would not be willing to die for us pitiful sinners if He loved Himself the most. But He said: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." He would have walked away if He chose comfort over pain. Rather, He prayed: "Father, not my will but yours be done." We cannot love others freely until we get our priorities right. For the past few months, I have been repeating a daily morning prayer: "God, help me to love You first, love others more, and love myself less." Recently, I added another request: "Lord, help me keep my mouth shut if I don't have anything positive to say. Let the first thing I say be words that praise or encourage others." I challenge you to consider those prayers. To love others is not just a choice, but it is also Jesus' command. May our church be filled with people who love God and obey His command to love others.

INTRODUCTION 引言

愛是一種選擇。有時，這個選擇需要付出極大的代價。查德·阿諾德（Chad Arnold）的故事正是自我犧牲的寫照。他患有無法治癒的肝病，器官移植可能是他唯一的希望。然而，捐贈者的等待名單非常長，而醫生估計查德可能只剩下幾個月生命。除了從別人的遺體獲得器官之外，另一個辦法是從活人的身上拿出一塊肝組織。肝臟在接受者與捐贈者體內最終都會長回正常大小。家人和朋友們紛紛接受檢查，以確認是否為合適的配對對象。結果發現，查德的一個妹妹和一個弟弟是最理想的人選。最小的弟弟萊恩（Ryan）表示願意捐贈。但查德拒絕了這個提議。萊恩回答說：「如果你是我，你也會為我這麼做的，不是嗎？」轉眼來到手術當天，一切進行得很順利。查德在手術後幾乎立刻出現明顯的改善。萊恩一開始也感覺良好。然而，他後來心臟止停動，甚至陷入昏迷，並在兩天後過世。查德對萊恩的犧牲充滿感激，但同時也懷有深深的悲痛與內疚。他立志要活出有意義的人生，讓萊恩的犧牲變得值得。一個人付出生命，另一個人卻活了下來。耶穌選擇為人而死，讓所有相信祂的人得著永生。這不只是一個激勵我們跟隨的愛的榜樣，更是主給我們的命令。愛應該是耶穌門徒的標記。使徒約翰透過兩個「曉得」或「知道」的宣告，清楚傳達這個原則。他在第 14 節說：**我們因為愛弟兄，就曉得是已經出死入生了...**。表達愛就是證明我們在耶穌裡有了新生命。約翰也在第 19 節寫道：**從此就知道我們是屬真理的...**。去愛別人，就是在操練我們作為被救贖之人的新性情。如果我們是被神所愛，我們也就能去愛他人。愛不應該只是一種感覺，它也必須帶有行動。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Proves Our New Life 新生命的證明 (v. 11-15)

首先，愛是我們新生命的證明。這顯示我們已經從死去的靈魂轉變為新造的人。約翰用該隱的負面例子來說明這一點。該隱對自己的親兄弟毫無愛心。這個故事記載在創世記第四章。該隱因為神悅納了他兄弟亞伯的祭物卻沒有悅納他的祭物而生氣。這並不是因為亞伯獻上的是動物，而該隱獻的是農作物。神不像我們某些人一樣是肉食主義者！希伯來書 11:4 解釋背後的原因：**亞伯因著信，獻祭與神，比該隱所獻的更美...**。亞伯是出於信心獻祭。他不擔心自己先給神就會有所損失。亞伯甚至將最好的獻給神。創世記記載他把羊群中頭生的、和脂油獻上。該隱不高興，因為神看中了亞伯的祭物。神警告該隱要檢視自己的動機，否則罪會勝過他。但該隱沒有聽從。憤怒進一步升級變成仇恨。無法控制的仇恨最終導致謀殺。該隱殺了

自己的親兄弟，因為他裡面沒有愛。約翰評論說，該隱是屬那惡者，因為他的行為是惡的。這樣的敵意在墮落的世界中非常普遍。作者在第 13 節提醒我們：**弟兄們，世人若恨你們，不要以為希奇。為什麼世界會恨基督徒？耶穌在約翰福音 15:19 告訴我們：「你們若屬世界，世界必愛屬自己的；只因你們不屬世界，乃是我從世界中揀選了你們，所以世界就恨你們。」**如果你屬於耶穌，世界就會恨你。世界恨我們所相信的，因為真理指出罪。例如：神是創造生命的主宰，因此基督徒捍衛生命的神聖。但有些非信徒主張他們有權利摧毀生命。不是聖經對，就是他們對；兩者之間沒有中立或灰色地帶。這個世界試圖想出另一套理論，以支持自己的觀點。但最終，當世界無法抵擋真理時，它會轉向仇恨。然而，約翰提醒我們，在神的家中是應該沒有仇恨的。他在第 14 節說：**我們因為愛弟兄，就曉得是已經出死入生了。沒有愛心的，仍住在死中。**這裡說「弟兄」，當然也包括姐妹。我們必須去愛信仰群體中的成員。在你說你愛城市裡的流浪漢，或是其他國家的難民之前，你必須先愛我們教會裡的人。這裡「愛」這個字是持續的時態，意思是愛別人應該成為我們的本能，不需要刻意思考，自然而然地表達出來的。我們不應效法該隱和這個世界去恨別人。否則，這顯示我們仍死在罪中，沒有永生。我們沒有人會用暴力去殺人，但在登山寶訓中，耶穌說生氣就等同於殺人。這是非常嚴重的事！我們或許不敢用武器殺人，但卻可能在心中「殺人」。你是否因為不喜歡某些人，縱使他們所做的事有好的結果，也會否定他們？你會否在心中批評持不同觀點的人？我們不只在心中殺人，也能用嘴巴去「殺人」。你是否編造故事、毀謗他人，而不是先查明事實？你是否總是挑剔別人、貶低他人？讓愛成為我們教會的標誌。願神用祂的愛充滿我們的心，使我們的話語充滿善意和溫柔。我們拒絕對他人的惡意猜疑，也不在了解全貌之前就下定論。只要那些意見不違背聖經，我們就應當接納不同的想法。若有人言行與真理不符，我們要帶著恩慈去糾正。我們要像神一樣，恨惡罪，但愛罪人。

2. Practices Our New Nature 新性情的操練 (v. 16-20)

去愛他人證明我們有了新的生命。其次，這也是我們操練新性情的方式。約翰在第 19 節說：**從此就知道我們是屬真理的...**。認識真理的人，就必須真誠地去愛人。之前，約翰用該隱作為負面的例子。現在，他用耶穌作為愛的完美榜樣。他在第 16 節把耶穌對我們的愛，以及我們對別人的愛關聯起來：**主為我們捨命，我們從此就知道何為愛；我們也當為弟兄捨命。**主對我們的愛是無條件的，是犧牲的，是完全的。祂的跟隨者也當這樣去愛主內的弟兄姐妹。在應用這個原則之前，我們先思想耶穌是為怎樣的人而死。羅馬書 5:8 給了我們答案：**惟有基督在我們還作罪人的時候為我們死，神的愛就在此向我們顯明了。**耶穌是為罪人而死。那時候，我們仍然在罪中悖逆，明知故犯，完全不明白我們在得罪神。此外，我們也在罪中迷失，不知道天父正等待我們回家。耶穌救贖我們，並不是因為我們比別人更好，而是因為祂憐憫我們。我們也應當用這樣的愛去對待他人。約翰在第 17 節向我們發

出挑戰：凡有世上財物的，看見弟兄窮乏，卻塞住憐恤的心，愛神的心怎能存在他裡面呢？這裡「塞住憐恤的心」原文直接翻譯是「關閉他的心腸」。對猶太人而言，心腸是憐憫的源頭。福音書的作者描述耶穌看到人受苦時「動了慈心」，原文正是指祂的腸子被攪動。這樣的情感推動祂去幫助那些人。約翰所提的情況是我們能做到的。你是有資源去幫助那位有需要的弟兄的。這不像他欠了一百萬元的債務，而你無力借錢給他。約翰說，若我們選擇袖手旁觀，神的愛就不在我們裡面。「神的愛」這個用詞可以有兩種理解。第一，指的是我們對神的愛。約翰在第四章提到，如果我們不愛看得見的弟兄姐妹都，又怎能說我們愛那位看不見的神？第二，它也可以理解為神對我們的愛。若我們不愛別人，那麼神的愛也難以充滿我們，因為我們堵住了神恩典的流通。最近，我們在研讀亞伯蘭的一生。神賜福亞伯蘭，是因為神要藉著他去祝福其他人。對我們也是一樣。在我妻子手腕受傷的這幾週內，我們從你們許多人那裡得到了祝福。你們的關心、禱告和食物表達愛心。你們預備的食物為我們省下了不少做飯的時間。每次吃的時候，我都感謝神透過你們所表達的愛。去愛他人，必須從了解他們的需要開始。這不是去八卦，而是真誠地關心他們。你不只是答應為他們禱告，而是當下就與他們一起禱告。你與有需要的人分享時間和資源。願主激勵我們，以實際行動將祂的愛傳遞給他人。你以單純的心去愛人，因為神先愛了你。他們可能不會欣賞你的善行，可能會忘記你的好意，甚至可能會懷疑你的動機。但你無法掌控別人的反應，你只能決定自己是否去愛。只要你憑著清潔的良心去行，神必賜福你。就算沒有人看見，神也記念你的努力。讓「愛」不只是一個形容詞或名詞，而是一個動詞。我們不只是談論愛，更要活出愛。

CONCLUSION 結論

愛不應該只是一種感覺，它也必須帶有行動。我們一生中都被教導要保護自己：這是「我的權利」、「我的喜好」、「我的看法」、「我的感受」、「我的時間」和「我的財產」。當我們被人佔便宜時，常會覺得是一件大事。我們的本能會驅使我們爭論、辯護，甚至報復。我們只想證明自己是對的、別人是錯的。若心態不改變，我們就很難去愛他人。耶穌為我們樹立了自我犧牲的榜樣。若祂把自己擺在第一位，祂就不會來到這個世界。祂卻說：「我的使命是要成就天父的旨意。」若祂最愛的是自己，祂就不會願意為我們這些可憐的罪人而死。但祂說：「好牧人為羊捨命。」若祂選擇安逸而非痛苦，祂早就撒手不管、一走了之。祂反而禱告說：「父啊，不要成就我的意思，只要成就你的旨意。」我們若不把優先次序排好，就無法真正自由地去愛別人。在過去幾個月中，我每天早晨重複一個禱告：「神啊，幫助我先愛祢，更愛他人，少愛自己。」最近我加上另一個禱告：「主啊，若我沒有什麼正面的話可說，就請幫助我閉口不言；讓我所說的第一句話，是讚賞或鼓勵他人的話。」我也鼓勵你試著思考這些禱告。愛別人不只是一種選擇，更是耶穌的命令。願我們的教會充滿愛神、並遵行祂的命令去愛別人的人。