

MARCH 2026 PRAYER SERVICE

Prayer Service for Chapter 7 of “Love is Much More Than Love” Study Topic The Chapter focuses on 1 John 3:18-24 By Fr. Eli Lopez, USA-SR Spiritual Counselor

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT:

1 John 3:18-24 urges Christians to express love through genuine actions rather than mere words, offering assurance of God’s greater knowledge and the confidence that comes from obedience, while summarizing the core commandment as faith in Jesus Christ and love for one another, culminating in abiding union with God through the Holy Spirit.

Key Themes:

- **Authentic Love in Action:** *"Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."* This reveals our alignment with truth and reassures our hearts before God, even when self-condemnation arises, for *"God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything."*
- **Confidence and Answered Prayer:** A clear conscience grants *"boldness before God"* and reception of requests, as we *"obey his commandments and do what pleases him."*
- **The Central Commandment:** Believe *"in the name of his Son Jesus Christ"* and *"love one another,"* as commanded.
- **Abiding in God:** Obedience ensures mutual indwelling—*"All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them"*—discerned by *"the Spirit that he has given us."*

This passage emphasizes practical obedience as the hallmark of true faith and divine communion.

Complementary Scripture passages to **1 John 3:18-24** emphasize authentic love expressed in action, obedience to God’s commandments, mutual indwelling through the Spirit, and purification leading to holiness – echoing the call to love *"not in word or speech, but in truth and action."* faith in Christ, and abiding in God.

Love One Another Deeply and Obediently

1 Peter 1:22-23 directly parallels the commandment to *"love one another"* (1 Jn 3:23), urging believers who have *"purified your souls by your obedience to the truth"* to *"love one another deeply from the heart,"* as they are *"born anew... through the living and enduring word of God."* This reinforces love as active obedience rooted in God's enduring truth, countering mere words.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth, so that you have genuine mutual love, **love one another deeply from the heart.** You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

Holiness and Hope Through Christ

1 Peter 1:13-21 complements the boldness before God (1 Jn 3:21) and faith in Jesus (1 Jn 3:23) by calling for disciplined hope on *"the grace that Jesus Christ will bring,"* holiness in conduct (*"be holy*

yourselves in all your conduct"), and trust in God who raised Christ, having been ransomed by his blood. This ties obedience to reverence, faith, and love, assuring eternal life.

Prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you... Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Prayerful Boldness and Purification

1 Maccabees 4:30-39 illustrates bold prayer and victory through trust in God, akin to reassurance despite condemnation (1 Jn 3:19-20) and the Spirit's abiding presence (1 Jn 3:24); Judas prays for divine intervention, leading to triumph and purification of the sanctuary, symbolizing cleansing for worship. This evokes active faith yielding God's presence.

These passages collectively deepen the message of 1 John 3:18-24, showing love, obedience, and Spirit-led abiding as transformative responses to God's grace throughout salvation history.

READING OF SCRIPTURE:

1 John 3:18-24

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. [Now] this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if [our] hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us.

A TIME OF SILENT MEDITATION:

SHARED PRAYER ON SCRIPTURAL TEXT:

The intent is reflection in the form of a prayer, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS:

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn, for example, "Lord, hear our prayer".

LITURGICAL PRAYER:

Psalms that complement 1 John 3:18-24 echo its call to authentic love through deeds (not mere words), obedience to God's commandments, confidence before Him despite inner turmoil, faith in His knowledge of our hearts, and abiding union discerned by the Spirit – expressed in prayers of integrity, praise, steadfast love, and merciful fidelity.

Psalm 26: Integrity, Faithful Action, and Thanksgiving Praise

Psalm 26 professes blameless walking, trust without wavering, hatred of evildoers' company, ritual washing in innocence, and aloud thanksgiving around God's altar, culminating in love for His dwelling and blessing in the congregation. This mirrors loving "*in truth and action*" (1 Jn 3:18), a clear conscience granting boldness (1 Jn 3:21), and abiding praise.

Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. ... I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar, O Lord, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all your wondrous deeds. O Lord, I love the house in which you dwell, and the place where your glory abides.

St. Thomas Aquinas links such psalmic meditation to good works, divine praise, and heavenly joy, kindling charity's fire for obedient action.

Psalm 119: Obedient Love for God's Precepts and Resulting Peace

This acrostic psalm repeatedly avows love for God's law exceeding gold, sevenfold daily praise, great peace for precept-lovers, and pleas for life amid persecution—fulfilling the commandment to believe and love one another (1 Jn 3:23) through unwavering obedience, as God knows the heart (1 Jn 3:20).

Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous ordinances. Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. ... I love your commandments more than gold, more than fine gold.

It embodies the Spirit's abiding assurance (1 Jn 3:24), with the psalmist delighting in statutes amid adversaries, trusting divine mercy and truth.

Psalm 36: God's Steadfast Love and Refuge for the Upright

Contrasting the wicked's self-deception with God's transcendent love, faithfulness, and salvation for the upright-hearted, it calls for continued mercy and protection. This complements God's superiority to our hearts (1 Jn 3:20), prayerful confidence (1 Jn 3:22), and mutual indwelling.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings... O continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your salvation to the upright of heart!

Pope John Paul II highlights *eméth* (truth/fidelity) as joyful, unbreakable covenant love in the Psalter, sustaining believers amid trials.

Psalm 86: Confident Appeal to Merciful Love and Hearing Prayer

A plea for mercy from the faithful servant amid affliction, professing God's uniqueness in *hesed* (lovingkindness) and *emeth* (truth), it trusts divine ear-turning and salvation works. This parallels bold prayer from obedience (1 Jn 3:21-22) and Spirit-led abiding (1 Jn 3:24).

The Psalmist directs to the Lord, trusting in his love... certainty that the Lord is a "*God of mercy, compassionate, slow to anger, full of love, faithful God.*"

Pope Francis notes that the psalms teach prayer in distress, drawing us to God's initiative and unbreakable covenant.

These Psalms, as the Church's "symphony of prayer," sustain praise amid obedience, revealing God's faithful love and inviting action-oriented communion.

Psalm 86:1-17

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

*Preserve my life, for I am devoted; save your servant who trusts in you.
You are my God; be gracious to me, Lord; to you I call all the day.*

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

*Gladden the soul of your servant; to you, Lord, I lift up my soul.
Lord, you are good and forgiving, most merciful to all who call on you.*

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

*Lord, hear my prayer; listen to my cry for help.
On the day of my distress I call to you, for you will answer me.*

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

*None among the gods can equal you, O Lord; nor can their deeds compare to yours.
All the nations you have made shall come to bow before you, Lord, and give honor to your name.*

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

*For you are great and do wondrous deeds; and you alone are God.
Teach me, Lord, your way that I may walk in your truth, single-hearted and revering your name.*

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

*I will praise you with all my heart, glorify your name forever, Lord my God.
Your mercy to me is great; you have rescued me from the depths of Sheol.*

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

*O God, the arrogant have risen against me; a ruthless band has sought my life; to you they pay no heed.
But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in mercy and truth.*

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

*Turn to me, be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant; save the son of your handmaid.
Give me a sign of your favor: make my enemies see, to their confusion, that you, Lord, help and comfort me.*

Response: *Incline your ear, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.*

CONCLUSION OF PRAYER TIME:

Prayer for Married Couples: Abiding in Love Through Deed and Truth.

ALL:

Heavenly Father, whose love unites spouses in the unbreakable communion of Matrimony, confirmed and deepened by Christ in the Eucharist, we your married children beseech you through Jesus Christ, your Son, and the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church.

Grant us, as spouses, to love not in word or speech, but in truth and action—in the daily fidelity of total mutual self-giving, open to life's fruitfulness as your gift. When our hearts condemn us amid trials, reassure us, for you are greater than our hearts and know everything; purify our love through the sacrament that overcomes self-absorption and opens us to one another.

Fill us with boldness before you, O God, that we may obey your commandments and do what pleases you: to believe in the name of your Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he commanded. May our conjugal love, rooted in divine love, be creative and life-sustaining, ennoble us as cooperators in your work of creation, generous in parenthood, or faithful amid childlessness.

Let us abide in you, and you in us, discerned by the Spirit you have given—the same Spirit who sanctifies our union, making us witnesses of faithful, merciful love. Teach us to possess one another in sanctification and honor, not in passion's lust, but for the good of offspring and mutual remedy against sin.

Through this holy estate, may we grow in communion, reflecting Christ's love for his Church, until we share eternally in your banquet of joy.

Amen.

This prayer draws spouses into the obedient, Spirit-led love of **1 John 3:18-24**, applying it to the Church's vision of sacramental marriage as faithful self-gift, openness to life, and divine indwelling.

DEEP POOLING:

This is a time to share on more serious matters or when the input of the group is requested. This will not necessarily happen at all meetings.

SHARING ON THE ENDEAVORS:

We join teams in order to enlist the help of others in growing closer to God. The “endeavors” are practices which we voluntarily assume. They have been found to be a means of drawing us closer as a couple and in furthering our spiritual growth. By sharing on the endeavors at the team meeting we seek help and encouragement from our teammates in our journey.