

# Worksheet

## STAFFING AND THE SCRIPTURES

Working in a church environment has some unique dimensions. While most of the population commutes to work, many church and ministry staff move home, move their families, schools, and their relationships to invest in serving in a community to bring glory to God. In addition, their families are often intimately involved with church life. Whatever happens, wherever good or bad, has an impact on the whole family.

Read 1 John 3:11-18

<sup>11</sup> For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. <sup>12</sup> Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. <sup>13</sup> Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup> We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

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This passage has a wonderful focus on love. It is not the "love" that leads to a licence to do whatever one may wish. But it is a tangible and practical love for our brothers and sisters. Furthermore, it is founded on the model of Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us.

In a world that thrives on change and new things, it can be tempting to get tired of hearing about God's love. We can feel old and stale - as many in our congregations are also tempted to feel. However, the Bible teaches us that it is this Gospel that is the power of God and the wisdom of God (Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18ff). It transforms the world. It is the source of forgiveness before God. And it also transforms us.

We should expect that the world hates Christians. But Christians are to be different. Because Jesus loved us with his life, love should characterise our attitudes and actions toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. In 1 John, it is explained as one of the significant markers of the Christian life.

Yes, staff are employees. There are obligations and proper ways of dealing with people. At

the same time, staff are brothers and sisters in Christ. Whatever else we may do, there is an important pastoral dimension.

Even giving constructive feedback in a helpful way is a form of loving brothers and sisters. Letting things go, in the long term, is not good for anybody. Helping people to understand themselves and the gifts that God has given them is both loving, and brings glory to God.

When working with the opposite gender, remembering that they are also our brother or sister in Christ is paramount. And whenever difficulties arise - and, from time to time, they will - it is also important that we act with love toward our brothers and sisters. We are in a relational community not just with them, but our families also live in the same community.

Love can and should take tangible forms. I heard about a man who was working for a ministry organisation, and his car broke down. The old car needed \$1,000 of repairs to get back on the road, with no guarantees as to how long it would last even after that. The broke man approached his boss to see if the organisation could get a loan. The boss circulated the need among the staff, with a mechanism to take up a collection. And a few days later, the boss called in the man, and said: "I can't give you a loan, but we've taken up a collection. Here's \$9,000 for a new car!"

The section of 1 John 3 ends with challenging words: Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth. (1 John 3:18).

Reflection Questions:

**How can you give constructive feedback to someone in a loving way? Or, is it not possible?**

**Think about a current staffing situation. How can you love your brother or sister in Christ at this time?**