

The Love Book

The 'Love Book: tell someone you care' published on Valentine's Day by the Herald Sun contained messages of romance and passion. According to the Nielson research company, Australians buy 1.8 million kilos of boxed chocolates and more than 800,000 bottles of sparkling wine to declare their love on a typical Valentine's Day!

Psychologist Dr. Di McGrael says "A successful relationship needs to be worked at every day . . . people need to let each other know how much they are appreciated and loved." She offers seven ways love may be expressed.

The Bible book of First John is written as a circular Love Book. John uses words reminiscent of valentine greetings, each expressing deep affection and godly love: 'my dear children' ['teknia' 1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4, 5:21]. John uses the word 'deeply loved ones' which God used of Jesus in Matthew 12:18 where it means 'uniquely loved' ['agapêtoi' 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11]. Then he describes them as children because they know God the Father. That is, they are born of God, they are God's children, they are Christians ['paidia' 2:13, 14, 18]. However in 3:13, John describes them as 'my brothers', my spiritual family members.

This Love Book from John is saturated with love and expressions and evidences of both God's and a Christian's love. The magnitude of God's love is that we should be called 'children of God' [3:1]. God's love is without parallel in the universe. The outrageous extreme expression of God's love for us is that Christ 'laid down his life for us' [3:16; 4:9-11, 14].

Loving God is an exclusive, single focused love. We are not to fall in love with the world because we cannot 'two-time', loving both God the Father and the world at the one and the same time.

Love is incompatible with hate. Whoever does not love does not know God. Everyone who has been born of God, i.e. become a Christian, loves [4:7-8]. Anyone claiming to be a Christian, yet hates another Christian, makes a false claim and is still in the darkness [2:9; 4:20].

Our love for each other as Christians is not to be limited to words, talk or statements in a newspaper, but expressed with actions and in truth, by laying down our lives for another Christian [3:16-18, 23; 4:7; John 15:12-14]. John applies this in a very down-to-earth way by asking: If anyone has worldly goods and sees his brother in need, but closes his heart or affections on him, how can the love of God be in him? Genuine, authentic Christians will not close their hearts toward a fellow believer in material need. If they do, their claim to be a Christian is false.

'Dear friends, since God loved us to such a degree, we must love each other'