



LOVE MADE KNOWN – Part 8

A Love Relationship With God

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to 1 John 4. It's good to be together around God's Word. I actually just got off a red-eye flight this morning from a week in South Korea, so I am operating on not a lot of sleep and my body has no idea what time it is. I'd like to ask you to overlook anything incoherent that might come out of my mouth. It's not necessarily the wisest thing to speak in front of thousands of people and be recorded when I really should be asleep.

As a side note, when I or any other pastor travel to preach somewhere else, I want to be a faithful extension of you. I was saying to these churches in South Korea, McLean Bible Church in Washington, DC, is with you. We are partners together in the spread of the gospel around the world. I actually ran into a couple of McLean Bible Church members who were visiting there. So a variety of us from this church were in South Korea this last week. It was really interesting

God did an unusual work in my heart in the last few days, in such a way that I want to shift where we'll go next week so I can share with you some of what God showed me. The next two weeks are set aside by many churches as Sundays to focus on and pray for the persecuted church and for orphans. We had already planned to focus some on praying for the persecuted church, but I'm going to tie that in to some things I want to share from my time on the Korean peninsula over the last few days. Then the following week, Lord willing, we're going to focus on orphans and the opportunities we have right around us to show God's love as the Father to the fatherless.

This leads right into 1 John 4 today, where I want to show you the love of God in a fresh way. Before we dive in there, let's do our memorization together. We're memorizing this chapter one verse at a time. I met a woman in Korea who lives a couple hours south of Seoul and who had come up to hear me preach. She listens to our sermons here on podcast and is memorizing 1 John 1 with us. So be encouraged that as you're memorizing Scripture, you're encouraging sisters and brothers around the world to do the same.

So let's do this. Are you ready? If not and your Bible is open, just read along with us. It will encourage us all and keep us on track. To the extent you can, let's say John 1:1-7 together:

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the

word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Boom! Seven verses—we're almost there. Three more verses over the next three weeks. Even though we're going to take a little detour the next two weeks, we won't stop our memorization. So keep going.

Last week we left off with 1 John 4:7, and this text we're about to read is incredible. I've so been looking forward to walking through this passage with you. I have one overarching truth I want to show you today: the true Christian life is a love relationship with God. Remember that throughout this letter, John is talking about false professors of Christianity—people who claim to be Christians but are not. So how can you tell a true profession of Christ from a false profession of Christ? What 1 John 4:7-5:5 teaches is that the true Christian life is a love relationship with God that is evident in someone's life. When you see a man in love with a woman, or a woman in love with a man, it is evident in the way they relate to each other, the way they talk about each other.

What I want to show you today is that the true Christian life is a love relationship with God that is evident in the way we relate to God and talk about God. So as we read this passage, I want to encourage you to observe—or maybe even actually circle or underline—every time you see the word “love.” If you do that, you'll be doing a lot of work in what we're about to read. First John 4:7—this is the Word of God:

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.¹⁷ By

this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* ¹⁹ *We love because he first loved us.* ²⁰ *If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.* ²¹ *And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ² *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.* ³ *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.* ⁴ *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith.* ⁵ *Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Does it not sound like a broken record? Love, love, love, love—32 times in what we just read! The true Christian life is a life of love. It is a love relationship with God. John just keeps hitting this over and over from different angles and different perspectives. We've seen this already in this letter. John doesn't move in a linear style, arguing from point A to point B to point C and D and so on. Instead, it's more circular. It's almost like we're walking up a spiral staircase and looking at something in the middle from different perspectives and different angles as we go higher and higher and higher.

So in this passage, we're looking at love in different ways and from different perspectives. We just keep circling it. So in this sermon I'm attempting to capture all the different dimensions of love in our relationship with God that are taught here in this incredible text.

God is love.

Let's start with the primary truth that dominates everything the Bible is teaching us. Everything God is saying here starts with this: God is love. He is love. Verses eight and 16 say that outright. It's a pretty powerful statement to say someone is love. It's like saying, "David is love," as if David was synonymous with love. "David is perfectly loving." That's not true. I'm not always loving in every way. I'm not love. You could not say, "David is love." But you can say, "God is love." Supernatural love exists eternally in God. It finds its existence in Him. It's in His nature to love—and it always has been. Before time began, before the world was even created, God was love.

We've seen all over 1 John the trinitarian nature of God: God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Spirit. Before man or woman or anything else was even created to love, God was loving in and of Himself. It's part of His nature. It's part of Who He is. Just as the sun gives light because it is light and

fire gives heat because it is heat, God is loving because He is love. Supernatural love exists eternally in Him.

Supernatural love flows from God.

So it follows, then, that supernatural love flows completely from God. It's what John said in the first verse we read, "*Love is from God...* (1 John 4:7)." It doesn't start with us. Love starts with God. Verse ten says, "*This is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us.*" Love started with Him, not with us. In love, He sent His Son to be the sacrifice for our sins.

Notice, this implies that we are not loving. We are sinners against God. We have all turned aside from God. We have not been loving toward God—none of us have. We have all been defiant toward God. The primary problem in every single one of our lives is that we have defied God instead of loving God. Supernatural love doesn't start with us. Natural rebellion starts with us. This makes God's love totally different from the way we think about love.

As I have been letting this soak in to my own life, I think about the people I love most in this world. I think about my wife, Heather, and our kids. Let's just think about Heather. I fell in love with her as a teenager. Do you know why? Because I thought she was lovely. I was attracted to her beauty, inside and out. I fell totally in love with her. I was doing all sorts of dumb things to try to impress her, because I wanted her to love me, because I thought she was lovely. My love for her has only grown. We'll celebrate 19 years of marriage this year, and she is more beautiful to me today than she ever has been in my eyes. There's a sense in which my love for her was prompted by her loveliness—then even by her love for me. The more she loves me, the more I love her.

But this is not the way a relationship with God works. I think my wife and I have a pretty healthy relationship, but love in our relationship with God is so much different and so much greater. In our relationship with God, love flows completely from Him. In our sinful nature, there is nothing in us that loves God. We are prone to defy God. We don't desire Him. We are not drawn to Him. We are sinners who have turned from God. In our lives, we desire so many other things in this world more than we desire Him, especially ourselves. So this is love, not that we loved God, but that when we were totally unlovely, God loved us. Isn't that awesome to think about?

I talk with people who say, "Look at all I've done in my life. There's no way God could love me." But there is, because His love doesn't start with you—it starts with Him. Ladies and gentlemen, there is no sin in you that is greater than God's love for you. Isn't that good news to a bunch of sinners who have done all kinds of wrong things? There's no sin in you that is greater than God's love for you. It's a totally different way to think. God's love for you is not in any way dependent on you. God never

says, “I love you if...” or “I love you because...” God loves you, not because of what you do, but because of Who He is. He loves you because He is love.

This also means His love for you does not grow. Do you know why it doesn’t? Because it can’t. It’s perfect in the first place. Just feel what this means. Christian, you are totally free from any and every attempt to earn more love for you from God. God will never love you any less than He does right now, and He will never love you any more than He does right now. He loves you supernaturally. His love flows from Him, not from you. Let this soak in.

In a world where we are wired to love the lovely, God loves us when we are unlovely. In a world where all kinds of people will say, “I will love you if you will do this, if you will do that,” they will love you when things are going well and don’t love you when things aren’t going well—in many of our lives, people have loved us for a little while and then left us. Think about husbands who have stopped loving their wives, and vice versa. Parents who have left your home, who have loved you and then are not there anymore. Children who have rebelled against parents.

In a world of unpredictable, undependable love, the nature of God is 100% predictable and 100% dependable. He is love. Christian, He loves you. Right now where you’re sitting. He loves you with a perfect love. Feel that right now. He loves you with a perfect love that is not dependent on your performance for Him. It’s dependent on His nature. If you’re a non-Christian visiting with us or if you’re exploring Christianity, we invite you to receive this love right now.

I took an Uber ride from the airport this morning so I could run home quickly to clean up. I was with a guy who was asking where I came from. I told him I was coming from overseas. He said, “Ah, it sounds like a long trip, but at least you’ve got all day to rest.” I responded, “Uh, not really. I’m a pastor.” It was great. He said, “Oh, you’re a pastor? Can you tell me what your message is?” Sometimes when you want to share the gospel, you have to be looking for an “in.” It’s not normal for someone to just say, “Tell me your message” as their leading question. I said, “Yes! I can tell you what my message is.”

So if you’re exploring Christianity, here’s the message, the conversation I had this morning. We have all sinned against God and are separated from God. We deserve to be separated from Him forever. But God loves us and has sent His Son to pay the price for all our sins. That’s what propitiation means here in 1 John 4:10—but I didn’t mention that this morning. But I did talk about sacrifice for sin, how Jesus has paid the price for us. He died in our place, taking the judgment we deserve upon Himself, so that you and I can be forgiven of our sins and restored to a love relationship with God forever. That’s the message and it’s a great message. I can sleep tomorrow—I want to proclaim that message today. So I invite you to receive that love right now.

As I was praying this morning, I realized there are probably some people who have been in church for years, but they have simply been going through the motions. They’ve never received His love

in such a way that they have a real love relationship with God. If that's you, I want to invite you to receive His love. God is love, in Whom supernatural love exists eternally and from Whom supernatural love flows completely. God is love.

The true Christian has been born of God.

The true Christian—the one who has received this love—has been born of God. What does that mean? First John 4:7 says that love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God. He's talking here about the true Christian, the follower of Jesus. This is obviously not saying that non-Christians can't show love in different ways. They certainly can—although even that love is also ultimately from God. But when John says “whoever loves,” that language is referring to children of God who have received His love.

This is what happened when any one of us became a child of God, a follower of Jesus: God's Spirit opened our hearts to His love. So Christian, God's Spirit has opened our hearts to a love we could never deserve. Somebody told us the message, the good news, that God loved us so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins. When we heard that news at some point in our lives, God opened our hearts to believe it. We realized that apart from His love, we were destined to die an eternal death. We deserved hell. But God loves us and He's manifested His love for us by sending His Son to save us (verse nine). Why? Verse 13 explains because the Spirit of God caused us to see. Then verse 14 says we can now see and testify that *“the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.”*

The Spirit has opened our hearts to a love we could never deserve, which makes this gathering right now so unique. What qualifies us to be in the church today? A certain intellectual capacity? A socio-economic status? Political position? Certain innate gifts or abilities? What makes this gathering across Washington happen right now? It's none of those things. What brings us together is that not one of us is qualified to be in the church. What unites us together is our sinfulness. We all deserve separation from God forever. But by His Spirit, God has opened all our hearts to a love none of us could ever deserve. We're all the same in this. Regardless of political position, socio-economic status, intellectual capacity, innate gifts or abilities, we're all just overwhelmed by a love we don't deserve.

As a result of God's Spirit and God's Son, we have now come to know the supernaturally loving God, the God Who is love, as our Father. We're born of Him. He's our Father. It's what we saw in 1 John 3:1: *“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.”*

Put this together with what we've already seen. Supernatural love exists eternally in the Triune God. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, the Father and Son love the Spirit, and so on. Now, you've got to see this. Remember what Jesus prayed right before He went to the cross, way back in

John 17. In John 17:26, Jesus prayed to the Father, *“I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”*

Did you hear that? Jesus just prayed that the love the Father has for Him as His Son would be in those who follow Him. I want us to think about that. How much does God the Father love God the Son, Jesus? He loves Him perfectly, fully, completely, unimaginably. You can't get any greater love than the love the Father has for His Son. This kind of love is the same love God has for you, sons and daughters of God. God loves you like He loves Jesus, His Son.

This means that if God the Father's love for the Son is in us, then we have that kind of love of the Father for the Son as well. So the whole picture is this: God has invited all of us as His children into this Trinitarian fellowship of love, which is exactly what 1 John has been teaching all along. *“...Indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son...”* (1:3b). We're experiencing this kind of love relationship. Just like the Father and the Son, we're in the middle of this thing. The love they share, we share.

Just think about this, right where you're sitting now. You have come to know the supernaturally loving God as your Father and you are His son or daughter. You're born of God. The true Christian is born of God and now abides in God. It just gets better in 1 John 4:15-16: *“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”*

These are breathtaking words. For the true Christian, we abide in God and God abides in us—God lives in us. His Spirit now dwells in our bodies in a way we can hardly fathom. Christian, God has given His supernatural Holy Spirit to live in you in a way you and I cannot even comprehend (verse 13). You are in God and God is in you. This means we now walk with the supernaturally loving God as our Friend.

Look at 1 John 4:7: *“Whoever loves...”*—referring to the true Christian, the follower of Jesus—*“has been born of God and knows God.”* You don't just go to church and do some stuff that makes you a good person. No. You know God as your Friend. Not as a distant deity, but as a constant Friend. This is mind-boggling.

See the description of the Christian, the true follower of Jesus, in this passage. The true Christian has been born of God and now abides in God. God's Spirit has opened your heart to a love you can never deserve. He now dwells in your body in a way you can hardly fathom. As a result, you know the supernaturally loving God as your Father and you walk with the supernaturally loving God as your Friend.

We trust in God's supernatural love for us.

So what does this mean for our lives? This means everything for our lives! Therefore, let's trust in His supernatural love for us. Over and over again in this passage, we see an emphasis on believing in God's love for us in Jesus. Look at verse 16: "*So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.*" We believe the love God has for us. Later, in 1 John 5:1: "*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ*" —the Messiah, the Savior, the Lord of all—"*has been born of God.*" Verse five speaks of the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

This is what makes us Christians: we believe in Christ. We believe that God sent His Son to die for us so we might live through Him (1 John 4:9). We believe that, but we didn't just believe that one day in the past and kind of move on with our lives. No, we believe that today. That's what it means to be a Christian—to believe today in the supernatural love of God for you. I love the way verse nine puts it: "*God sent his only Son into the world...*" why? "*So that we might live through him.*" Yes. God sent His Son to die for us so we might live through Him.

That means for the Christian, Jesus is now your life. He's not part of your life. That's not Christianity. It's not part of your life over here—you've got work, you've got family, you've got sports, you've got recreation, you've got Jesus. No, no, no. Jesus is your life. He's your everything. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus. He is your life. Six times from verses nine to 16, John talks about how our lives are saturated by Jesus.

It's in Galatians 2:20: "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" He's my life. Jesus is your life. So, Christian, let's live by faith in Him, believing in Him, trusting in Jesus as your life every single day. Bring it down to the practical. Trust Jesus as your strength this week; trust Jesus as your joy this week.

I was talking to somebody in the lobby before this gathering. They were in tears, going through some challenges in life right now. They were lacking joy and I was praying over them, that they might trust in Jesus for joy. If you trust in things of this world for joy, you're going to go up and down. If you trust in Jesus for joy, you will always have it. Trust in Jesus as your peace. Trust in Jesus for your wisdom. Trust in Jesus for your hope and confidence. The more you know Jesus as your life, the more you will trust Jesus with your life.

So live by faith in Him, trusting in His love for you. He didn't just love you 2,000 years ago. He loves you today. You can trust His love 2,000 years ago, and you can trust His love today. Live by faith and you will have nothing to fear. That's what we read in verses 17 and 18:

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

We have nothing to fear before God our Father. We are forgiven of our sins by faith in Jesus. I'm encouraged to hear you applaud, because I think many Christians kind of live in a state of low-level feelings of shame before God, even fear of God. They're hesitant to go before God, because they're convinced He's disappointed in them. They hesitate to go into His presence to pray. I just want you to hear what the Bible is teaching, because as He is, so also we are. As Jesus is, so also we are.

Does Jesus cringe and hesitate to go into the presence of the Father? Is Jesus ever distant from the Father? No, no, no. Jesus reveres and honors the Father, but He knows He is welcome with the Father. There's no shame in Jesus before the Father and there's no fear in Jesus before the Father. Christian, Jesus is your life. You're in Him. You don't have shame before the Father. Your shame has been covered by the blood of Jesus. You have His righteousness before the Father. As He is, so are you. So, yes, revere God. Honor God. But know and live in the reality that you are loved by God, which means you have nothing to fear.

I've seen surveys in our church family, and fear is at the top of the list of struggles in our church. It makes you want to shout this. I pray that God by His Spirit will let this truth seep deep into your heart. When you are supernaturally loved by the sovereign God over this world, you have nothing to fear in this world. Let it seep deep. When you are supernaturally loved by the sovereign God over this world, you have nothing to fear in this world. *"Perfect love casts out fear..."* (4:8).

Now let's put this together. Perfect love casts out fear. How do you fight fear within you? Fight fear in you with trust in God's love for you. God is supernatural love. We are born of Him. We abide in Him. So Christian, let's trust every day, every moment, in His supernatural love for us. Pray this: "Things are not going well, but I'm trusting in Your love." This is Christianity.

We obey God out of supernatural love for Him.

Let's trust in His love, then let's obey out of supernatural love for Him. This is where we see the relationship between all this talk about love and obedience to God's commands. It's summarized most clearly in 1 John 5:2-3: *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."*

I love this. You've got to see what this means. We love God by obeying God. We obey God out of love for God. Love and obedience go together in this picture in a way that I think we often miss. I think many times Christians think of obedience to God almost with a negative connotation. For example, my kids, don't always think of obedience positively. They're not always smiling in obedience. Why? Because in certain circumstances, they think their ways are better. They want to do what they think

instead of what I say. Even if they obey at that point, it's a begrudging obedience—and they make that clear.

I think this is how many people live the Christian life. We don't really want to obey God's command, but we know we're supposed to. So we do our best. We're good at trying to find loopholes where we can. "I mean, He didn't say it specifically like that, right?" We really like our ways better than His. But that is the opposite of the Christian life according to God's design. God has designed obedience to His commands to be overflow of this relationship with you that is driven by love. This means His commandments are not burdensome.

What a great phrase! "*His commandments are not burdensome.*" What does that mean? Follow this. God's commands would be burdensome if either of two things—or both of them, for that matter—were true. One, God's commands would be burdensome if we could not do them. If God was commanding you to do something, and you couldn't do it, that would feel like a burden. If somebody tells you to do something you can't do that feels very burdensome.

Here's the beauty of 1 John 4 and 5, particularly verses four and five in chapter five. Christian, we have power to obey God's commands. "*Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*" This is great. The root word for both "overcome" and "victory" in the original New Testament language is *nike*, from which we get what sports brand? Nike. Who knew Nike was biblical? It's like that brand is preaching everywhere it goes.

When you read this word, picture an athlete triumphantly crossing a finish line, scoring a touchdown, hitting a home run, winning a game. This is how the Bible describes the Christian in his or her battle with sin in this world. You are a victor. Through faith in Jesus, you have victory over sin. If you are facing a battle with sin, just picture spiking the ball, flipping the bat and running around the bases—victory. That's a great picture. That's what Jesus has made possible for you in your battles with sin.

Think about it. You have His power in you. God abides in you. Just drop the mic. God abides in you, Christian, which means you have power to overcome sin. Remember, Who is your life? Jesus is your life and He has conquered all sin and all temptation which means His victory can be your victory over sin. God's commands are not burdensome, because we have power to obey them.

But then there's a second way God's commands might be burdensome and that would be if you don't want to obey them. So even if you can do them, but God gave you commands you don't want to do that would feel like a burden. But God's commands are not burdensome—why? It's not just because we have power to obey, but because we find pleasure in obeying them. The Christian finds pleasure in obeying God's commands. So many Christians view God's commands as a duty we need to keep, like a

religious obligation we need to follow in order to save our skin in eternity. But deep down inside we really just want to live like the rest of the world. That is not Christianity.

Put together all we've seen today. God is love, supernatural love. The Christian is a child of God, born of God, who calls God Father and who knows God as Friend. He or she believes and trusts in God's supernatural love for him or her. This means that when a Christian hears a command from God, he or she knows that command is driven by love. He or she knows that this command comes from a perfectly loving Father, Who always, always, always knows what is best. So what does the Christian do? The Christian thanks God for that command. "Thank You for leading me in the way that's best. Thank You for not hiding that from me. Thank You for Your commands." The Christian works to obey His commands, not out of a sense of duty, but out of a sense of delight. That's a very different way to think about commands.

Let's make this practical. When you hear the command to sexual purity that is radically different from what you hear in this world, you don't think, "I can't do this." You don't think, "I don't want to do this." Why? Because you know God abides in you. Jesus is your life. You can resist this temptation and you want to. Why? Because you trust that God's ways are so much better than the ways of this world, and you believe that true, lasting pleasure is not found in the ever hollow, always fading, empty promises of sin, but in the always good, always faithful promises of God.

Look at every single temptation you face that way. How do you fight sin? By focusing on God's love for you, by believing His ways are better. His love is good and it gives you the desire to obey. We obey God—why? To earn His love? No! We obey God because He loves us and we trust His love for us. Love drives obedience, which leads to the last overall exhortation in these verses.

We display God's supernatural love for others.

We trust in His supernatural love for us, we obey out of supernatural love for Him, then let's display His supernatural love for others. As we're going up that spiral staircase, John starts here and keeps coming back here. The first words in 1 John 4:7 are, "*Beloved, let us love one another...*" Verse 11, "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another...*" Verse 20-21, "*If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*" Then in 1 John 5:1 he says, "*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.*"

In other words, as we've seen in previous weeks, the love of the Father is reflected in the love of the family for one another. And the truth in all of this is really pretty simple. When the supernatural love of God abides in you, the supernatural love of God overflows from you. It's pretty simple. If somebody

has the love of God in them—if it’s abiding in them and is part of who they are—that will affect how they live. So when verse 11 says we ought to love one another, that doesn’t mean, “I don’t really want to, but I guess I ought to.” That’s not what the Bible is saying here. I love how one preacher said it: “When John says, ‘ought to,’ he means ought the way fish ought to swim in water and birds ought to fly in the air or living creatures ought to breathe and peaches ought to be sweet and lemons ought to be sour.” It’s because that’s who they are. It’s what they do by nature of who they are.

So when I say you ought to breathe today, you don’t think, “Ahh, okay, if I have to. I’ll work on it.” No. You’re thinking, “Okay. Thanks. It’s kind of what I do as a human.” Christian, you ought to love one another. “Yeah. It’s kind of who we are. It’s kind of what we do.” It’s the overflow of what it means to be born of God and having God abiding in us. We ought to love with the same love of the Father Who sent His Son to lay down His life for the world.

So let us lay down our lives in self-denying love for the church. There’s a clear emphasis in this passage on brothers and sisters, other children of the Father, our spiritual family. God desires McLean Bible Church—every one of our congregations individually and collectively, and the churches we plant for that matter—to be outposts of love, self-denying love, all over the church. We must be men and women who put aside our preferences and plans, even our possessions, in love for brothers and sisters in the church.

We must also do these things in love for the people who need to hear the good news of God’s love and see it in action in the world through our lives, through our families and through the church. So let’s pour out our love in risk-taking love for the world. Risk-taking is the right description. Remember back in 1 John 3:16 how Jesus laid down His life for us? So we ought to lay down our lives for others. “Lay down our lives for others? Yeah, that’s kind of what we do.” We ought to lay down our lives in self-denying love for the church.

So I would just ask you, as a follower of Christ, how are you doing this? Examine your heart in light of what God is saying today, asking, “How am I laying down my life for brothers and sisters in Christ?” We ought to pour out our lives in risk-taking love for the world. So how are you doing that? Who in your sphere of influence who does not know Jesus are you pouring out your life for so they might know Jesus? So they might have life in Him?

That’s the overflow of a love relationship with God. The true Christian life is a love relationship with God. I would ask every person to examine your heart with this bottom-line question: How is your love relationship with God right now? First, do you have a genuine love relationship with God? Not, do you go to church, do good things? All kinds of people go to church and do good things. Do you have a love relationship with God? If your heart does not resound with a “yes” to that question, then I invite you today to enter in to that kind of relationship with the God of the universe.

If you do, then what might need to happen in your life for that love relationship with God to grow and deepen and flourish more and more and more? Again, not in such a way that you're thinking of how you need to earn more love from God. No, He is love. But how do you do this in response to His love? What might He be calling you to do to trust His love more, to obey and delight in His commands more, to show His love to others more?

Let's pray.

O God, we praise You, for You are love. You are perfect love and we worship You. We thank You for Your love for us. God, I pray that today Your Spirit might open hearts to receive a love that none of us could ever deserve. I pray that You would bring people today to a love relationship with You for the first time. God, please, may it be so.

And then, O God, for all of Your children—for our brothers and sisters, for Your sons and daughters who have trusted in Your love—I pray that You would draw them deeper into this relationship that You have designed for them. Help us to be a people who experience the height and depth and breadth of wonder of a love relationship with You on a day-in and day-out basis, more and more and more and more. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

All Scriptures are quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt. Website: Radical.net