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## 1 JOHN 4:17-5:5

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### Part 10 of Epistles of John

Pastor Mark Driscoll | 1 John 4:17-5:5 | September 12, 2004

Good evening. Good to see you guys. If you guys got a Bible, you can go to 1 John Chapter 4. We generally go right through books of the Bible, and we're in 1 John 4. Finishing up 1 John this summer, and then, October 3rd we're gonna kick off Genesis. I'm so excited. It's like a hillbilly redneck soap opera, the whole book. It's just everybody's drunk and marrying their sister and pimping out their wife. It's crazy. So it will be great, and we'll start that in October, and in the next couple weeks, you will get 190-page commentary on the book I wrote for you, and so just get you all geared up and ready to go.

I have the sniffles. The only thing worse than having the sniffles is having sniffles on a really good sound system. So you're gonna deal with that all night. I apologize in advance. Kind of hopped up on cold medicine feeling really good. So good to see you all. I will pray, and we'll do our work in 1 John, and then, continue.

God, thank you for loving us. Thank you for being a God of love. Thank you for being the God who does love. We ask that today we would receive your love, some of us for the first time, some of it in a new way, some of us perhaps just as a good reminder that you are consistent and faithful, and God, as we receive your love, we pray that it would change ours so that we would obey your word, that we would be children who respect their Dad and respect his authority and respect his commands, and we pray that out of that, we would love people around us as you have loved us so that your love wouldn't stop with us, but that it would extend through us to those who you put in front of us.

God, as we study, we ask that you would show us the great love of the Lord Jesus. We pray that would be made possible by the Holy Spirit, and we ask as we leave here, that your love would go before us and your love would go with us and that your love would go in us in Jesus' good name. Amen.

This will be the third of three sermons out of 1 John dealing with the theme and the topic of love. 1 John 4 is the one of the richest, thickest sections of your Bible on love. If you pair that with 1 Corinthians 13, you kind of get the Clif Notes version of what the Bible means by love, and so today what we're going to talk about is your love for God. Last week, we looked at God's love for you. We're gonna juxtapose these two concepts in some ways, but before I get into it, I want to do some philosophical background because when I say love, most of you are thinking of an emotion, and some of you aren't sure whether or not that's good.

How many of you, when I say the word "emotion," it conjures up something kind of negative? You're saying, "Emotion, I'm married to someone emotional. I know who she is." That's not good or "I know who he is." I'm equal opportunity sexist or "We are raising them and they're very emotional." You know we – when we think of emotion, usually we think of a negative thing, especially if you've been in a Bible believing or stall \_\_\_\_ Christian church for any amount of time. Emotion's very bad. Most churches that don't like emotion, God's a big idea. He's a big mind in the sky.

You walk into church. You open your Bible. You simulate into the Borg. You download information, and then, you walk out very stiff, and just sort of, "Mmm, good download. That was a good Sunday. I got a good download." You don't raise your hands. You don't shake your born-again buddy. You don't do anything because that's emotional. You don't want to be emotional, right, and there's a reason for that, and I want to talk philosophically about emotions, and I think one of the reasons why we misunderstand emotions in general in our theme tonight, which is love in particular, is because when our emotional life is detached from God who is our creator, our emotional life, as well as our mind, becomes corrupted, and it gets astray.

Now when it comes to your emotions, it's interesting because when we're talking about emotion, we're talking about passion. We're talking about what great theologian Jonathan Edwards called our affections. Some of you will say, "Well, I don't want to be emotional." Do you want to be passionate? You want to be affectionate? The Westminster Confession of Faith says that God is without parts or passions. That's really not true. God is very passionate. We'll look at that tonight. God is very passionate, but this idea that maybe God isn't that passionate or God isn't that affectionate or God is not that heartfelt towards us comes not from the Bible, but it really comes from Greek philosophy which influenced Roman culture, which has influenced American culture.

We're basically, in many ways, drinking out of the well of Greek culture, and in Greek culture, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle the great philosophers. They taught that the emotions were kind of dangerous. So the emotions are almost like a team of horses, and your mind is like the reins. So your emotions can get you going, but you better use your mind and reason to restrain and constrain your emotions. Otherwise, you get in big trouble. What they believed was that your head was affected by sin and the fall in a way that your heart wasn't, that your heart was more sinful and depraved and untrustworthy than your head.

So they taught that we should believe our mind over our heart, and most people, most Christians in particular, still believe this. I remember as a new

Christian getting that little choo-choo train that there's fact, and then, there's faith. Then, there's feelings, and feelings are way back here. Feelings are not important. Worry about the facts and the faith, and the assumption is my mind is more redeemed than my heart. It's a big problem. That's not really true, and so out of that, there was another stream of Greek philosophy called the stoics, and you've heard of someone who you go, "Man, he's very stoic," just sort of stiff and unpleasant looking.

That's a stoic person. Well, there was stoic philosophers. Stoic philosophers didn't say just that emotion was necessarily a potential bad. They said it was altogether bad. So their goal was to be absolutely logical, to just live a life of syllogisms and not poetry, to think true thoughts and not to be emotionally engaged or involved, and the apex culturally for us of what a stoic looks like is Spock from Star Trek, just the facts, just rational, just logical. How would you ladies love to be married to that guy, right? "I wrote you a nice syllogism for your birthday. Oop, I said nice. I apologize. I wrote you a correct syllogism for your birthday."

That was the goal to become dispassionate, unaffectionate, unemotional, objective, uninvolved, not let the emotions cloud the mind because the mind's good and the heart's bad. So out of this history, out of these two streams of the emotions are kind of bad or they're altogether bad comes history, but then, leads us 2,000 years later to a gentleman named Rene Descartes, who's a philosopher, and when it comes to defining what it means to be a human being, he comes down to this premise. He says, "I think. Therefore, I am." I think. Therefore – what that means is "I know I'm a human being because I have ideas."

It's interesting. He didn't say "I love. Therefore, I am," or "I am loved. Therefore, I am." He elevates the mind to the center of what it means to be human, and as image bearers of God, we do have a mind, and we should love God with all of our mind, but Jesus says as well, "We should love the Lord with our heart and our strength and our soul, and we should also love our neighbor as our self," that the mark of humanity for Jesus is not just that we think, but that our thinking and our feeling and our acting is out of love, and so love is the hallmark of what it means to be a human being.

This moves on through history through another philosopher named Immanuel Kant, and he says that emotions are an illness of the mind. He says it's a pathology. It's like a disease. If you feel something, that just proves there's something desperately wrong with us. It leads to another gentleman named Sigmund Freud who's the founder of modern-day psychology, and he says that we are two parts, id and ego. He's wrong. He's wrong about all kinds of things, but he says that we're two parts, id and ego, and in the id is our emotion, and in the ego is our reason, our head and heart, and that the id is always trying to dominate the ego.

The heart is always trying to overwhelm the mind, but the mind must reign for us to be reasonable human beings and to live a decent life. It's very, very interesting because people who don't understand this, when they come to the Bible and they think of God, they try to think of God in a dispassionate, unaffectionate, distanced way. You read the Bible. God is passionate. He says, "Yes, come passion, jealousy, love." In Psalm 5, he hates those who do evil. He gets angry. He laughs. He's grieved that he made man. I mean God is a passionate God. God is an affectionate God. God is an emotional God. God's emotions are not out of control, but he is very passionate, and I want you to see that God is a red-hot God.

He's not an icy cool-blue God. He's not a God who could take it or leave it. He's a God who involves himself because he's so passionate. This leads to another gentleman, Karl Marx, founder of modern-day communism. What he basically says is, "You know, love is important. We've totally overlooked love." He's right, and he says, "So what we need to develop is a society whereby people love one another and this is the communist utopian dream," and what he says is the biggest problem is that people in power don't love those people that are under their authority.

So the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have this big conflict and those are in power don't treat people under their authority well, but we need to create an equal society where people love one another. He's got a great idea. It almost sounds like he was reading the New Testament. The only problem was he forgot that he was a sinner, and he checked God out of the equation. He was an atheist, and he decided that he would build a society of love, but he didn't tap into God who is love, and so there was no love for that culture, and it collapsed, and he himself had one employee, a woman that he impregnated, got angry with, and kicked down the stairs while pregnant with his child.

It's interesting. The emotions are very, very bad or they're kind of bad, but your mind is very, very good or your mind and your emotions are at war, but your mind will fix it or you know what? Your emotions are good. You can be a good person, all of which philosophy, politics, and psychology are founded on the assumption that we can have a loving society apart from God, and none of them work. None of them work, and so what I want you to do tonight. I want you to take your philosophy. Set it on the shelf. Take your psychology. Set it on the shelf. Take your politics. Set it on the shelf.

What we're gonna do we're gonna bring out the Bible. We're gonna take a look at it. We're gonna ask, "Well, what does God say about emotion in general, the emotion of love in particular? Is there a way to get us out of this mess of emotion and love? Is there a way for us to be emotionally healthy and loving people here on the earth? Is it possible?" So last week, we looked at the fact that there is one God, Father, Son, and Spirit out of 1 John 4, and this Trinitarian God is the God of love, that love exists within God, and that God demonstrates his love for us in Jesus.

God comes to die for our sin and to rise to conquer our sins so we're loved, that God loves us, and then, he gives us the Holy Spirit for those who repent of sin and believe so that now we have God's love in us. We're connected to the God of love. We're back in loving relationship with God, and what we looked at last week is that this love isn't sexual love. It's not sexual love, and it's also not selfish love or "I love people who love me" or "I love people that I want to love me," but it's a supernatural love. It's a spiritual love. It's a special love. It's a selfless love, whereby we have the capacity to love like God loves, and that is to love enemies and strangers.

See you and I, because of sin, we being our relationship with God as strangers and enemies, and God loves us, making us friends, and when God does that, then we are a changed people to act like God, and we become loving to strangers and enemies and hope that they become friends of God and

friends of ours. We looked at that last week. This week, what we're gonna talk about is less about God's love for us that we will hit it, and we're gonna look at our love for God, what that does, what that means, what that looks like in life, what a healthy, passionate, red-hot, emotional life of love connected to God accomplishes on the earth.

John starts with this. Jesus' dearest friend says, "God is love." Okay, we don't need to start with philosophy or psychology or politics. We don't need to conjure up an idea that love is God. We need to define love. We don't need to begin with any definitions or conjecture. We start with a person of God. God is love, and from God proceeds love, and God is the definition of love. Whatever God does is loving. God is love. I hear this all the time. You know, I'll hammer some of you on this. I hear people say all the time, "I'm not a very emotional person. I'm not a very passionate person. I'm not a very loving person."

God is love, and so we should repent of our personality, our culture, our predisposition, and our habits if we're not being loving. We should just repent of that and be loving because God is love, and our example and what we are trying to be faithful to is not our disposition or our culture or our personality type or our family background or our history. We're trying to be faithful to be imitators of God, trying to be like him, and so we look at God, the God of the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we pattern our lives after the God who is love. God is love. Whoever lives in love, lives in God and God in him. What he says is this: Everything is gonna talk about love now comes out of a relationship where God loves you. You love God, and your emotional life is reconnected back to God.

Okay, this is made possible through Jesus. Jesus is God who became a man to save us from sin so that we could have our humanity restored and we could be people who are now loving, and our emotional life is connected back to God. I believe the whole problem with psychology, philosophy, and politics is that people are trying to deal with our emotional life apart from God, and when we're not connected to God, our minds don't work well, and our hearts don't work well. We don't think God's thoughts, and we don't feel God's feelings.

When we're reconnected to God through Jesus, love flows to us from God. Love changes us. Love flows from us back out to God. He's going to tell us then that this loving tether of relationship that is reciprocal with God accomplishes two things. One, it drives out fear of God, and two, it drives out hatred of other people. So he then talks about the consequences in the next section. "In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment because in this world, we are like him." That is God. There is no fear in love. Okay, I want to just give this thought to you. Some of you women are with men who say they love you, and you stick with them even though you're afraid of them.

Memorize that verse. True love is not accompanied by fear. The woman who says, "Well, you know, he kind of yells at me or he hits me or he intimidates me. I'm a little scared of him, but he says he loves me." He doesn't. He's a liar, and the truth isn't in him. The parent who says, "I really love my kid," and the kid says, "I'm kind of scared because they intimidate me and they yell at me and they're mean to me, and I'm terrified of my parents." The parents are not loving. The parent who rules through terror is not loving. The husband who rules through terror is not loving. The church that rules through terror is not loving.

If God were to rule through terror, he himself would not be loving, but he is love, and love drives out fear, and what we're not talking about here is reverence and respect. Proverbs 1 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." There is a healthy reverential respect for God. What we're talking about here is cowering in terror. If you know who God is, you know that he has loved you. You know that he has taken away your sin. You know that he knows all things, and that he loves without end, without fail, and that he will forgive anything you have done, and there is no reason for you to be in terror of God. Now if you're not a Christian, you should be sorely afraid of God. "It is a fearful, dreadful thing," Hebrews says, "to fall into the hands of the living God."

I mean Christians should always wear a cup and a helmet and shoulder pads and a mouthpiece and carry ointment and I mean, you know, it's – he's not happy that you have not repented of sin and given your life to him. He's not happy about that, but for Christians, we should not live in terror of God. Some of you are Christians, and the only reason you don't sin is because you're afraid God's gonna smack you. That's a very immature, undeveloped faith. He goes on to say, "There is no fear and love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment." That's the terror. "The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

Here's the point. You can obey God because you're terrified of him or because you love him. If you obey him because you're terrified of him, your whole relationship is wrong because you don't know who he is. If you think that you have to obey God, you don't understand him. If you understand that you get to obey God, then you probably know who he is. If you see it as a blessing, not a burden, if you see it as a loving Father who's protecting you from yourself and not just a mean overlord who's trying to deny you good pleasure, you'll obey him.

I'll give you an example with my kids. Yesterday, my wife loves me every day, but yesterday, she loved me in a special way, and it's not what you're thinking. I'll tell you what happened. For Father's Day, some months ago, she said, "What do you want for Father's Day?" I said, "I want you to take a class on massage." Write that down. What a great idea that was. Just unfettered brilliance in that one. That was one of my best ideas I've ever had, and I'm thinking, "How's this?" She says, "Okay." Yes, so we've been gone all summer and busy, and we've been waiting for this massage class. So she takes a ten-hour Swedish massage class. That's the only thing Sweden's given us that we really appreciate is the massage.

So she leaves, which means I'm on Daddy duty for ten hours from 9:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M. with my four lovely children. My wife leaves, and it's 9:03, and the kids look at each other, wife leaves. At 9:05, complete nuclear meltdown. Everyone is crying. Fluids are flying out of orifices. People are fighting over things that don't matter. It is just pandemonium, and I just feel like we need to put tumblers in my living room and get a whistle and a black and white shirt on me so I could just break up this mayhem, and I was meditating on this verse, and my first thought was, "I can scare them for ten hours. I could terrify them for ten hours and get ten hours of obedience, and then, hand them back to their mother when she gets home while I go get

my massage,” and I was thinking, “You know, if I was gonna do it, I could go out in the yard and get two-by-fours with nails on the end, and I could come in and quote the King James Bible out of context, and I could use this voice. ‘You’re gonna obey your Father. I’ll spank you. Your mother’s gone. There will be no witness.’”

That would have got me the better part of a day of compliance, not a great abundance of joy and love and any fruit of the spirit, but they may not have been disobedient, defiant for the day because they’re terrified. Some of you had a Dad like that. Dad would come home and you’d, “Oh, \_\_\_\_\_. Dad’s home.” You’d run. You’re fearful. Some of you were fearful of your Dad. Dad would be out drinking, come home. Oh, my gosh. You’re faking like you’re asleep or hiding under your bed or just trying to avoid him because you think, “You know what? He’s mean. He’s nasty. He’s violent. He’s angry. He terrifies me. The only reason I don’t get in trouble is because I’m scared of him.”

That’s not God. God’s not that kind of Father. God’s a kind of Father that even if you did sin and he comes home, you run to him because you know that the only way to deal with your sin is to sit down with your Dad. He’s loving, gracious, kind, merciful, compassionate. He’s not this mean overlord. He’s not this objective Freudian middle manager with a clipboard in the sky remaining objective and neutral and filling out blanks. He’s a loving Father, and when he comes, you run to meet him because you love him. I was thinking, “You know, okay, I’m reading 1 John. I got to do this right. Otherwise, I got to tell them how I messed it up tomorrow at church.” So what I said was, “Okay, kids. That’s it. Everybody, break it up. Like go to the neutral corner, right?”

I said, “Everybody break it up. You go here. You go here. You go here.” My 11-month-old daughter, she couldn’t go anywhere. She didn’t know what’s going on, but the other three, I said, “You know what? That’s it. You guys all go and pray to Jesus. Tell him there’s not any love in your heart today. He knows that, but tell him, and then, ask Jesus to put love in your heart, and don’t come back down until he’s put love in your heart, and when he’s put love in your heart, come back down, and then, we’re gonna have a nice, fun, happy day.” So they all, break, go. My two-and-a-half-year-old son, Calvin, goes up to his room. We got a monitor in his room.

So I’m listening in on the monitor, see how it’s going, listening in, and he always prays for whatever I ask him to pray for and juice. Every prayer the kid has ever prayed includes juice. So I hear him up there. “Jesus, Calvin not nice today. Give me juice and love. Amen.” It wasn’t the most distinguished prayer. His five-year-old brother had a little prayer going on. Seven-year-old, she had a good prayer going on. So I’m just waiting. I’m down there. “Lord, please put love in my kids’ hearts. I don’t want to threaten them, yell at them. I don’t want to have them be fearful of me. I don’t want to intimidate them. I don’t want to raise my voice. I want to have fun with my kids today.”

So they finally come back down. I’m telling you. It was amazing. Different countenance, kids are happy. We had a great day. We hung out all day, had a ton of fun, ton of fun. The kids were obedient, compliant. They were sharing. They were loving, and the whole theme of the day was love, love, love, love, love, love, love, and at the end of the day, my wife came home, and all the kids were there with all of their parts, and she was just shocked that we had made it this far, and we were all cuddling up in my bed, and my wife said, “Well, how did it go today? How was everything?” My seven-year-old daughter, she smiled. She said, “It was great. We loved each other all day.”

Okay, this is what it’s talking about. I could get my kids to obey me through sheer terror or love. Terror only lasts as long as they think I’m looking. Love endures forever. You have a God who’s a Father. He wants you to know that he loves you. He wants you to love him. He doesn’t want you to be terrified of him, particularly when you sin. When you sin, the last thing you need to do is run far away from your Father. You need to run right into his arms. He loves you. You will not be able to deal with life apart from him, and it’s a foolish kid who thinks that their Father doesn’t know, and it’s a foolish kid who thinks that their Father can’t forgive. This is what he’s talking about.

If you’re terrified of God, some of you are not Christians, and you’re just terrified of hell. You’re terrified of God. If you knew who God was, and if you had given him your sin and received the Lord Jesus Christ, your relationship would turn from terror to love. It would transition from an absolute fear to an adoration, that his love would change your heart and that you would obey him because you love him. We’ll talk about this a little more as we go. So the first thing that God’s love does, it drives out terror and fear of God. We now can sleep. We can live as free, passionate, emotional, affectionate people knowing that if I make a mistake, if I should sin, God is a good God, and he will not just crush me. He’ll forgive me and restore me, and God will continue to work with me because he’s a great Dad.

The second thing that love does is it drives out hatred toward others. This is where he goes in the next section. We love because he first loved us. Now this is so important because this distinguishes our faith from every other religion in the world. Every other religion says, “God is up here. You are down here. God is not happy. Make him happy. Be good. Give money. Whatever it is, do something to please him, and then, when he’s pleased, you will appease his terrifying wrath and anger, but you got to earn it,” and you’re never sure if you got it quite right, but it’s up to you. You go first. It’s like God is sitting there holding all his cards close to his chest saying, “Show me your hand.”

That’s not God. Our God is a loving God. Our God loves first. When we sin in Genesis 3, he came looking for us. The story of the Bible from Genesis 3 forward is God on a rescue mission to save us from ourselves. The story of the Bible is that God is seeking worshipers, that God loves us, that we’re running from him and he is in hot pursuit, not that we’re out running toward him. It’s only when he catches us and loves us and embraces us and forgives us and redeems us and adopts us into the family of God, that then we learn that we can trust him and run toward him. God loved you first. We say, “I’m not sure he does.” Jesus Christ died and rose. You’re loved.

For God so loved the world, that he sent his only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish. No need for terror, but instead, there is the gift of eternal life. God loved us first. He initiated with us. He pursued us. He extended his hand to us. God loves us, and what this accomplished then is if anyone says, “I love God,” we’d encourage you to say that truthfully from your heart, not a bad thing to say. I love God, but if anyone says, “I love

God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. He's a liar. Here's the reason why. For anyone who can not love his brother whom he has seen, can not, hypothetically impossible, love God whom he has not seen, but he has given us this command. "Whoever loves God must also love his brother." Lots and lots of people who claim to be Christians say, "I love God. I have a personal relationship with God. God loves me. I love God. That's what makes me a Christian."

Not so. "God loves me. I love God, and I love my brothers and sisters in Christ." That is evidence of true faith. God is not exclusively worried about the vertical relationship. He's also concerned about the horizontal relationship. He wants you reconciled to him. He also wants us reconciled to each other. It is not uncommon to find someone who says, "I'm a Christian. I just don't go to church, and I don't like Christians." That's a huge exploding denomination of liars. All right, so it would be like liar on Bible church. It's this huge denomination that's exploding. Some of you here tonight say, "I don't like Christians. I'm never coming back." Well, I'll tell you. This is very important. You can't say you love God, and you hate God's people.

If you came to me and said, "I really love you, and I hate all your kids." Well, those are my kids, and my kids are a reflection of me, and if you – here's his point. If you can't love people you do see, who have needs, who are sitting next to you tonight, you can not love God whom you have never seen. If you can't love the person who's looking you in the eye, you can't love the Lord because it's just not possible. It's just not possible, and it's an amazing thing because we are brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the great new \_\_\_\_ family. We as the church are a family. What that means is we love the world, but the love begins with spouse and children and family and friends and church and the people who sit next to you. Okay, some of you come in. You come out, and you treat this as if it were just to download information, as if the only thing you worship God with is your mind.

I came in, didn't sing, didn't raise my hands, didn't say "hi," didn't love anybody, didn't do anything, didn't connect in any way, but I downloaded information, and then, as soon as Mark's gone, I walk out the door because I got my information, and that's what church is about, right? Church is about me going in, getting information in my mind, and then, leaving. No, it's about loving God and loving your brothers and sisters. It's family time. This is a family reunion. That's what it is. How many of you go to a family reunion and say, "Hi, I'm here for the family reunion. How many of us are there? Good, okay. I'm going home now. I got all the numbers." Did you say "hi" to anybody? Did you meet anybody? Did you get any names? Did you have any hors d'oeuvres? Did you love anybody? "No, no, no. I'm not here to love anybody. I'm just here to make sure that I know the number of people in our family and the number under each last name, and as soon as I did all the math, then I had all my work done."

A lot of people do that. They walk in. Okay, here we are. This is our address. This is our name. This is our God. Good, good-bye. What about the family? Every time you meet a Christian, it is a family reunion, and it's interesting, isn't it, because people who don't know their biological parents, they reach adulthood, and there's a compulsion in them to go find their family of origins, and they want to see who their relatives are. Spiritually, we're supposed to be the same way. "Oh, you mean there's other members of the spiritual family? I would love to meet them." You're at work. You're at school. You're at the grocery store. You meet somebody who's a Christian. Its like, "Good to meet you. Hey, a family member, didn't know that God was so busy loving so many people and building such a huge family."

Now I'll tell you what. I'll brag on two churches this week, not ours because you'll think I'm setting you up for something. I'll tell you about two churches this week who have demonstrated this in the last week that I found out about in an amazing way. The first was the City Church over in Kirkland. There are some people over there apparently who love the Lord over in Kirkland. So the City Church is a big church over there. Wendell Smith's got a big church going very well, and what they heard was they heard that there was another church near them that was really struggling financially, and so what they did is they took their whole Sunday offering and gave it to that church, \$150,000.00. This was two weeks ago. Now I heard that and I was like, "What?"

That is – man, that's loving your brother. Loving your brother is loving individuals, and it's also churches loving churches. Sometimes, you know what? Sometimes, churches don't love churches, and some of you may have caught my sickness. So I want to repent of it tonight, and I want you to work with me on being more gracious on this, but sometimes, one church doesn't like another church because they don't agree on secondary matters of doctrine. So the \_\_\_\_ don't like the charismatics. The Calvinists don't like the Arminians. The guys who have an organ and a hymnal and a liturgy don't like the punk rock band, and everybody's got their own little team, and there's little bickering between the family, and it's wonderful because Satan looks back and says, "That's perfect. I love it when they shoot each other because then I don't have to waste any bullets. It makes it so much easier if they just kill their own. I don't even have to get up. Just sit down and watch the mayhem."

And it's important that Christians love individual Christian. So when you meet your Baptist, your Lutheran, your Presbyterian, your Methodist brothers or sisters in Christ, love them, and it is important for us as a church to also love other churches and to be loving, and this doesn't mean that we agree with every other Christian on certain issues or that as a church, we even agree on everything, but the one thing we agree on is that we're family and that love is important because you can disagree with your brothers and sisters, but you don't bust up the family over things that are secondary. You love each other, and you hang in there, and for those of you that are intensely academic, you're like me. You're real theological. You white guys who read dead white guys. You guys, those are the ones I'm talking to. Think about this.

Maybe if you were nice to people who disagreed with you, they would listen and learn something and agree with you, but in the meantime, you need to be more loving to even get a hearing. I think this could be the great Mars Hill problem. We are the very Biblically-minded, orthodox, well-argued jerks. That could be who we are because of me. So don't say, "Well, it's because of him." I know. That's what I'm saying. So this week, I was – I heard that. I heard. You know what, man? The City Church gave the money to this other church. They're not in the same denomination or network of churches, and technically, they're in the same area so they're competition. You don't see this like between The Bon and Nordstrom's. You don't get this kind of love.

You know, the guys are at the corporate board meeting for The Bon, and they said, "Man, we heard the half-yearly sale totally tanked over at

Nordstrom's. Man, they're just hurting over there. We're doing pretty good. Well, you know, let's just send them checks. You know, we're gonna send them all our profits. That's so terrible." This just doesn't happen apart from Christ. People don't give away money, right? Like especially churches. You know, usually, we pass a plate 27 times. Out the way out, some big guy shakes you upside down and anything that falls out belongs to the Lord. I mean, you know, we're not – churches are not known for being real givers and a church, \$150,000.00 to another church, and I told my wife, and I said, "Can you believe that?" She's like, "That's wonderful." I said, "I know. I should call them and say, 'Hey, I got a church \_\_\_\_.'" No, I'm just kidding, but that's love.

You know, Jesus says when we love each other, that's how everybody knows that we belong to him. People go, "Well, you don't agree with them, and you're different than them. They do things different. Why in the world are you so nice to them?" "We're family." "Well, how are you family?" "We have the same Father. We've been saved by the Son. We've been adopted in to the same clan." The other one I got this week, and I'll say this. I got a call from Wayne Taylor. He's a senior pastor up at Calvary Fellowship, and I really respect the Calvary Fellowship. They do expository Bible teaching, a lot of church planning. They have exploded. They're one of the most successful church planning networks in the history of the country, and I got a call from Pastor Wayne this week, and he's a really nice guy, and he said, "I heard that there's tension between you and me, between our churches. I heard you're unhappy with some of the things I'm doing, and I love you. You're my brother. I don't want there to be tension. I'm calling to clear it up and make sure things are okay."

You know, I'm fine with it. I don't have any problems. He's a really good guy. He loves the Lord. He teaches the Bible. He preaches Jesus. I don't have any problems. I don't know how this weird rumor got going. I said, "No, Wayne. I love you. I really respect you." I said, "I've learned a lot just observing your ministry, and I don't have any problems." I said, "But man, I sure appreciate the fact you called. I sure appreciate the fact that you said, 'We're brothers, and I want to make sure that we're in loving relationship.'" I thought, "You know, that's wonderful." It's really nice to be loved and for people not to assume the worst and not to assume lies and not to assume bitterness and rumors. It's nice when somebody says, "I love you, and we're family, and I don't know if there is a problem, but if there, Jesus can take care of that, and we need to love each other. So let's get to that." Oh, great.

Wayne then says, "Well, that's great. I'm glad we're good." I said, "No, we're great." He said, "There's 40 Calvary pastors getting together, and Chuck Smith, the founder of the movement is coming, and we're all gonna get together for prayer and Bible study and fellowship. Would you like to come join us?" "Yeah, that sounds like a family reunion. I'd love to go meet the other – you know, the rest of the family and see what God's doing in the other churches. That's great." God is so gracious and kind because he puts up with all of us, and the thing of it is this. Doctrine exists in two parts. There is your theological belief system, and then, there's your life. I know a lot of guys who believe in love and can parse Greek verbs and are mean.

He calls them liars. I know some people are very, very loving, but they don't know who God is. Both matter, head and heart, loving the Lord with all of our mind and all of our heart. It's important that we know in whom we believe, and it's important that we love as he's loved us, in large part because no one will listen to what we believe about him until we first love them as he has loved us. God is so good. You know, that grace and truth balance and tension the two wheels on that bike, just keeps everything moving right along. We are a church that is very committed to doctrine, very committed to theology, very committed to Bible, very committed to teaching. I guess I just want to take Pastor John's words to heart. They convicted me this week quite frankly, and I want that to be imparted to you that we also need to be a loving people.

We should hug and "how you doing" and giving gifts and loving people and caring for one another and when people walk in and they say, "You know, this is a place where people are loved. They talked to me. They said 'hi.' They took me out to lunch. They prayed for me." When they ask, "How come you do this," the answer is always, "You know what? God is love. God has loved us, and God has sent us here to love you because he loves you as well. Would you like to know about him?" And that is the heart of God for the church, and that's what it means to be the church. God loves us. We love God. We love each other. That is what the church is. It's not just what we believe, thought that's important. It's how we behave as a result of whom we believe in.

This casts out fear and terror of God so we can calm down, sleep well, run with the Father. It also casts out hatred of one another so we can love each other as a family, and then, he wraps it up with a few other implications of this love in Chapter 5. He begins, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well." Here's how it's made possible: Jesus. The reason why people don't understand emotions in general and love in particular is because we can't obtain that by tapping into human philosophy, human psychology, and human political systems. The only way we get love is from the Lord, and the only way that we receive the love of the Lord is through Jesus. It's so simple. Our emotional life and our love is contingent upon believing in Jesus.

If you believe in Jesus, that he is God who became a man to die for sin and rise to take away sin so that you can be reconciled to God in love, then he says, "You are born of God." Now most people will say, "We want to establish loving relationships. We want community. We want a good society. We want a good city. We want to have people taking care of one another." Most everyone agrees that that is a great ideal. Hypothetically, it's a great idea. Practically, it's an impossibility. The only way it's made possible is by a new birth. See we're born physically, but we're spiritually dead.

Some people think, "Well, I'm alive now. I'm ready to love." No, you're not. To love, you must first be born again. Your body is born at birth, and your soul is born again at new birth. This is where you meet God in Jesus Christ, and you become a new person. Now the love of God is important to you. Now the life of God has imparted you. Now you're ready to go out in the earth and be upon the mission of love, but it begins with belief in Jesus Christ. He then moves forward from that premise to the next. This is how we know that we love the children of God. Now this is mind-blowing. How do you know that you love those people that are sitting here with you tonight?

Wives, how do you know that you're obeying Titus 2 and loving your husbands? Husbands, how do you know you're obeying Ephesians 5 and loving

your wives? Children, how do you know that you're loving your parents? Friends, how do you know that you're loving one another? This church, how do we know that we're loving one another? It's a very good question. This is how we know that we love the children of God, by loving God. This is beautiful. A lot of people think about, "Okay, I got to worry about loving my wife. I got to worry about loving my kids. I got to worry about loving my husband. I got to worry about loving my friends or my roommates or my coworkers or my neighbors or people in my church, my family, my friends. How am I gonna love them? How am I gonna love them?" Love God. Love God. Love God.

You say, "Well, how is that gonna love them?" If God loves you and you love God, you will love other people. Don't chase all the effects. Work on the cause. Loving time with God, loving relationship with God. Husbands, tell me if I'm right in this. How many husbands feel the most love by their wife when they see her in love with God? She doesn't need to do anything else. When they see that she is delighting in God, that she loves God, that she's connected to God, that makes them feel loved. When I come home and my wife is praying and reading the Scripture, I have never been so loved. I know that now love is coming to me through her from God because she is connected to God. My seven-year-old daughter, sometimes she'll say, "Daddy, I'm just gonna go to my room and get some time with the Lord." She'll go up and pray and read her Bible.

She's delightful. She is just the coolest girl, and you know what? I never feel as loved as when I see that my daughter loves the Lord. She doesn't know she's loving me, but man, she is. Nothing in my heart makes me happier than to see that those that I love, love the Lord. I was cuddling up with my two-and-a-half-year-old son today, Calvin. We were taking a nap between services, and he started asking me all these questions. "How come we went to church today, Daddy? How come we read the Bible?" He has all these "why" questions, and I said, "Because we love the Lord, and the Lord loves us," and it was really cute. I said, "Do you know what's most important to your Daddy?" He said, "What?" I said, "That you love the Lord. The most important thing to your Daddy is that you love the Lord. Do you understand that?"

He looked at me and said, "I understand." So I prayed for him. We fell asleep cuddled up, took our nap. My son, if he loves the Lord, he is loving me in a way that he doesn't even understand. If you want to love those people in your life, love the Lord. Then, the Lord will give you his love. His love will come through you. You will love other people. It will become second nature because you become a conduit for God's love. You'll become passionate to do good for others. The great Bible translators of old would take the word "love," and they would translate it as charity, which I love because sometimes love sounds like something that you just feel. Charity is something that you do. You will be passionate to be a kind, loving, merciful, gracious, honest, truthful, helpful, affectionate person if you love the Lord.

Do you love the Lord? You're gonna need to answer this down in your heart and go, "You know, good question." Some of you say, "Well, I believe." Well, the demons believe in God and they shudder, James says. I talked to a few demons this week. I had a very interesting week. I asked one of the demons. I said, "Do you believe that Jesus is God?" "Yes." "Do you love him?" "No." People who just believe that there's a God may be no further along than a demon. Demons know that Jesus rose from the dead. Demons know that there's one God. Demons know verses from the Bible. The problem is they don't love the Lord. That's the problem with Satan. That's the problem with Judas. It is not enough just to have a mental cognitive recognition and receptivity to the existence of a supernatural being. You have to love him.

God is not an idea. He's a person. He's not a syllogism. He's alive, and we come to him with our mind. We need to know whom we're loving, but we come to him with our heart. We have to be passionate about loving him, and if we do, that's the most loving thing that we can give to others. It goes on. How do we know we are loving the children of God? By loving God. First things first, then we will carry out his commands, and this is love for God to obey his commands. Here, John is again just echoing the Lord Jesus. He said, "If you love me, then you'll obey me." Some of you hear the word "obey." You go, "Obey, I don't like that word. I'm an indie rocker. I live in Seattle. I don't like the word 'obey.' That's a terrible word. That's why I ran away from home and learned how to play guitar. I hate that word."

Okay, obey is a great word providing you have the right Father. It all depends on who your Dad is as to whether or not obeying him is a duty or a delight. If you have a problem obeying God, you really have a problem knowing God. If you knew him, you would obey him. Here's the truth. God saves us from ourselves, friends. Genesis 3, tree of life, tree of death. We choose death. Every day since, we have chosen death. We are a suicidal people. We just slaughter ourselves. We kill ourselves, and God says, "I will save you. I will love you. I will change you." It is only a fool who looks at God and says, "No, I will do it my own way. I won't obey you," because God is the God of love, and God is the God of life, and if you would disobey the loving God of life, you would live in death apart from love falling, falling.

Some people say, "I love God. I just don't listen to him." You can't. I always do this with my kids. I tell you this all the time, but when my kids are disobeying me, I look them right in the eye, and I say, "Do you love the Lord?" "Yes." "Do you love your Daddy?" "Yes." "Then, what are you gonna do because the issue is not cleaning your room. The issue is not whacking your brother. The issue is not swimming in the toilet. Those are all effects. The issue is am I going to live out of love for God or not," and too many people are chasing, "I have an alcohol problem. I have a lust problem. I have a perversion problem. I have a sexual problem. I have a depression. I have all these problems."

Guess what? Those are all effects. There's one case. You don't know who God is. Friends, if you can study one thing for your whole life, find out who the God of the Bible is. If you know who God is, you will love him, and you will trust him, and you will obey him, and the sin in your life will go away because you will want to follow him, and you will trust him over that seed of rebellion from Adam that's in you that wants you to think that you're smarter than you are, getting you to choose death all the time and neglecting the loving God of life. You will obey God if you love him. You can't love God unless you know him. If you don't know him, you can't love him, and you can't obey him, and obedience is not your problem. Love of the one true God is always at the root of every sin and problem, that there are times when we love our sin and we love our flesh more than we love the Lord, and that's what leads us into trouble.

Obedience is a beautiful thing. It's just something that's disdainful in our culture because we're all wicked sinners, and we're selfish fools. It's not

popular. I told the first service. I said, "If the presidential candidate ran on this platform. 'I am about obedience.' No one would vote for that guy. That's not a platform you can win on." That's because we don't understand who God is. From Adam and Eve forward, disobedience has been the habitual pattern. It leads to death, not life, and it leads to misery and not love. Here's the curious thing he says about God's commands. Again, he echoes the Lord Jesus. He says that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. He says, "And his commands are not burdensome." How many of you have sinned and obeyed God and found that sin was more work than obedience?

Now it's easier to sin than it is to obey, but then, there's the effects of sin are a lot of work. The effects of obedience are pretty simple, right? Sometimes, getting drunk is easier than not getting drunk, but dealing with a hangover is far more work than just not getting drunk, that the problem is that you and I think that God's commands are burdensome. "Oh, God. Come on. That's a huge book. There's a lot of things in there. Come on." No, it's not burdensome. I'll tell you what's burdensome: Fighting against God, fighting against God's image that he made you in, and fighting against the order of creation that he has built the world. When you are fighting against your own image, the image of God in you, when you're fighting against creation, and you're fighting against God, that is a burden.

When you're obeying God and walking with God and complaint with God, it is not that life is simple and pain-free, but there is not that same burden upon you as when you're a rebel. His commands are not burdensome. For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Good question. Who is it that overcomes the world? I hope it's you. Man, I hope it's you. Here's how you get there. "Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." Say, "How am I gonna obey God? How am I gonna love God? How am I gonna love people? How am I gonna live an obedient life? How will I obey the Scriptures? How am I gonna overcome the world, the flesh, the Devil, the temptations, the seed of rebellion, my emotional frenzy, my nut job mind? How am I gonna do this?" Jesus, Jesus. Have you met him?

Do you know him? Do you love him? Has he taken away your sin? Has he opened your eyes so that you can see the goodness of God? Has he given you a new heart so that you can love God with the love that he's given to you? Have you been connected to the Father through the Son by the Spirit? It's Jesus. I know some of you are going, "Man, \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus. I knew he was going there." I'm always going there, right? I'm a band with one song. That's it. I just keep playing that same song, Jesus. The answer is not in human philosophy. The answer is not in human psychology, and the answer is not human politics and government. Our only hope is in Jesus. That's the source of our hope. That's how God's love is given to us, our sin is taken away. That's how we are made new, and that's how we are given a victory over the world system and sin and rebellion and folly is through Jesus.

Our humanity is restored, and our emotional life is restored, and our mind is renewed. Now we can think God's thoughts, and we can feel God's feelings. We can come back into that place that God intended us to be before sin came into the world, and I'm not naive, and I don't think we're gonna be perfect, and I don't think everything is gonna be perfect in this life, and I don't think that everyone is gonna go to heaven, but I do believe for the children of God that the promise of victory is not just a guess. It's an assurance that there is more to life than being a bummed-out, emotional basket case who is untethered from God and just lives from crazy idea to stupid feeling to broken relationship to heartfelt loss who then lays awake at night when they finally consider God and cowers in terror, hoping that he won't crush them in the end.

There's a lot more than that. There's love, and there's life, and there's Jesus who gives it abundantly. I want you to see this. By being connected to the Lord Jesus, our humanity is in the process of being restored, our mind and our emotions, that our community is in the process of being restored, that we're reconciled to one another in Christ, and that God has determined Acts 17 says the times and the places in which we live, which means your life is not an accident. You're here on a very important mission. Some of you don't even know why you're in Seattle. I'll tell you. God has put you here on a very important mission. First, to love you. Second, for you to love him and others. This is what Jesus says. The whole Testament is about loving the Lord and loving people. That's the sum of sound doctrine. That's the short version of the Old Testament. You and I are here friends on a very important mission.

We are here to love. We're here to love each other and to love everyone that God should put in our path. The people who God brings in your path, they are people that God is sending to be loved. He loves them. He loves them through us. I love you very much. I love this church very much. I'm very passionate about what we do here. I'll be here the next 40 or 50 years. This is what I'm doing until they kill me. Jesus comes back, and I call in happy and unemployed or I die of old age, and my whole goal is to have a big coffin up here. I preach the Gospel, lay down, breath my last, shut the lid, have an alter call, keep on trucking. That's my plan. So I plan on being here 40 or 50 years, and God has made it abundantly clear to me that I am here to love this church, to love you. Some of you are gonna be here with me for years and years and years. Some of you are gonna leave here, and you're gonna move elsewhere. God's gonna scatter you around. Great.

When you get there, find a church. Love your brothers and sisters, and bring the love of God. It's beautiful. It's wonderful. It's good. God, though, here is promising that for those he has loved, the church. For those who have loved him, the church. For those who that obey him out of love and love one another out of obedience, that there is a guaranteed victory. I want you to think about what does that look like when we have loved and loved and loved and loved and loved. Do you see where we're going? It's interesting. In the old stoic philosophers who believe that emotion was bad, they also taught that hope was a sin and not a virtue. We should be passionless and fatalistic. Friends, we are not stoics. We are Christians. We are passionate and optimistic.

We are people of hope and love because we are people of faith. I don't believe. I know, and I get up every day trusting that love wins in the end, that love was here before sin, that love will be here after sin is no more, and in the middle, love wins even if it doesn't look like it. There is a victory promise for those who are about the mission of love. Don't lose your mission. Don't get bitter and frustrated and petty and angry and selfish and mean-spirited and jealous. Don't lose your mission. It's so critical. God's intention is to love the people in this room through the people in this room to love the people

in this city through the people in this room and to love the nations of the earth through the people in this room.

What a great privilege it is. A promise guaranteed victory as certain as Jesus' tomb is empty. The love of God doing its work in the earth is a certain fact that we now believe by faith, and we will see by sight as it continues to do its work. Most important thing, though. Do you love Jesus? That is everything, and everything begins there. Have you given him your sin? Have you received his forgiving love? Are you seeking to first and foremost, before you run out in the earth and be a good person, to love him and have everything come from that place? This is your time to settle that with you and the Lord. Pray, confess your sin. Receive his love. Thank him. Love those people around you. Reconcile with anyone in the room that you need to before communion like Corinthians says.

We're gonna take of communion, which is remembering Jesus' body and blood. That's who we love. Our God has a name and a face, and he's come to seek and save us. We're gonna then give of our tithes and offerings. If you're a visitor or non-Christian, don't give. If you're a Christian, this is your church, give. It's one of the ways that we love, and then, we're gonna sing, and we're gonna celebrate, and we're gonna get a little emotional. Okay, for all you theologians who now leave saying, "Got the doctrine." Okay, raise your hands. Clap a little. Shake a little. You know, have a nice time. Sing, celebrate because we are people who in connection to God are back to being emotional, passionate, affectionate, red-hot people who desire to run to the Father and to grab as many people by the hand and take them with us.

And Lord God, we love you. We thank you for your love for us. It's been a long night already. I thank you for the patience of those people who have come. God, I pray first things first that we would know that you are a God of love, and that there is no love apart from you. I pray that then we would receive your love, given to us through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus for our sin. I pray that out of that, God, that we would love you in obedience knowing that the life that you have for us is not burdensome. It is blessed, and that out of obedience, then we would go out and love one another and love others who may even be currently strangers or enemies with a love that is not selfish, with a love that is not sexual, with a love that is supernatural because it is from you, and God, we thank you for all the people in this room who you love.

And we thank you for all the people that you will bring in front of them through the days of their life on the earth, that you love them, too, and that your hope is to love those people through these people. Jesus, I pray that we would have more than just a mental, cognitive, intellectual ascent to a few theological facts and ascend to a height no greater than a demon. I pray that we would love you with all of our mind, and we'd know the God of the Bible, and we would know in whom we believe, but I pray that it would not remain there, that we would be a red-hot passionate people who love and embrace and care, who involve ourselves when it's convenient, to do works of charity out of affection for those whom we meet. God, thank you so much for loving us, and thank you for the great mission of love, and thank you that love wins in the end. Amen.