

REAL LOVE

SERIES: REACH | WEEK 4 | 2.14.2021

[Pastors Lee Wiggins, Rob Mittuch, John Lawley]

Lee: Happy Valentine's Day. Yeah, um, we're going to talk about love today. Yeah. [JOHN LAUGHS] And, you know, we were talking about it as we walked in here, three guys talking about love, that's even weirder. [LAUGHTER]

Rob: It's gonna be a really short sermon. [LAUGHTER]

Lee: Well, we had, we had numerous conversations, Pastor Rob has a round table—by the way, it's [POINTS TO EACH] Pastor Rob, Pastor John, I'm Pastor Lee. Those of you online, awesome,



Left to Right: Lee, John, Rob

welcome, good to see you; those of you on the first floor, great; love to see all of you up in the balcony, hello! I sat up there during the worship night this week and I was just like, *Wow, that's what it feels like up here.* And sometimes I talk down here or to the camera, I don't forget about you up there, love you, good to see you. Thanks for waving, that's awesome. Good to see you all here this morning.

And hey, something we want, whether you're online or whether you're up there or down here or

you're watching it in a month, we want this to be a loving church. And we believe—we're in a series called REACH—that if we're going to be a church that reaches people with the love of Jesus, we have to love each other. And so we just thought this morning in the midst of this REACH series we'd just take a little break since Valentine's happens to fall on the 14th and we'd have a conversation about it. And the three of us around Rob's little round table have had discussions about love this week and, like, normally us dudes we don't talk about love much, and as we talked about love we found ourselves going, "Whoa! This is – there's like a lot to talk about in this topic." And we found ourselves at times going, "Yeah, but what about this?" "What about this?" "What about this?" And we're hoping to have a little conversation, the three of us with you, and you with us this morning, and in the course of doing that we're hoping to start a bigger conversation that maybe you'll have in your house or in your group this week, or if, you know, wherever you happen to find yourself.

Here's what I want ask you: If you're in this room right now, we're going to put a text number up on the screen because we want you to get involved in this conversation this morning. And it went really well first hour, they really – they liked this idea, so they started texting like crazy. And, um, John's and Rob's phones were blowing up here, so that's cool. So, like, if you see them staring at their phone they're not texting and bored because I'm talking.

Rob: I'm looking at Facebook, that's what I do. [THE THREE OF THEM LAUGH]

Lee: That's what they're doing. And, um, then you're also going to be watching online, so those of you online explain how that works.

Rob: Yeah, so often, you know, like I've – when I've watched at home a lot of times I just put it up on the TV and watch, which is great, but there's also the chat online. So what we'd love you to do this morning is if you're watching and if you have access, just go right on there and say hello



HAPPY VALENTINE DAY

Q&A

Text Your Questions to
(484) 229-5323

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right now and it'll ask you to put your name in there, that's all it takes, and you can be anonymous if you want to but

Lee: Put a fake name in.

Rob: you can put a fake name in or maybe your nickname in or whatever you want to, but we'd invite you online to join with us as we're asking some questions because we'd really like that to be a part of this entire morning.

Lee: So you can ask questions, you can answer questions. The first question I'm just going to throw out. Okay? Real low-lying fruit here, like, don't get godly on me.

John: Wait! Hold on. People are answering the question that wasn't asked yet. [LEE LAUGHS]

Rob: What was the question?

John: There was no question asked. I love it! I love it! [THE THREE OF THEM LAUGH]

Lee: So, no, um, don't get spiritual on me right now, but one of the things we talked about we were – it was like all week long we realized everything we say is *I love this, I love that*, it's like love is like a word we use in our language. And we found that because we use the word love so much in so much of what we say, it really confuses the meaning to us because it's, like, well what is really love?

Rob: We started laughing at each other all the time pointing each other out, "What do you love?"

Lee: [POINTS AT ROB] What do you love?

Rob: I really like, [HE LAUGHS]

Lee: I really like. [HE LAUGHS]

Rob: I love coffee.

Lee: Oooh! You got mine.

Rob: [POINTS AT LEE] I know, that should have been yours but I just drink coffee constantly.

Lee: Oooh, I love Starbucks, I shouldn't advertise that though.

Rob: My trick is I keep it just a third caf [caffeine] so that I don't get all jittery, so I drink like two-thirds decaf so I drink coffee all day long, but I love coffee.

Lee: What do you love, John?

John: Beef jerky. [LAUGHTER]

Lee: [POINTS AT AUDIENCE] Are you guys [LAUGHTER]. I had some of that yesterday.

John: Yeah, it's true. If anybody has any beef jerky [INAUDIBLE – LAUGHTER/CROSSTALK]. No, I do actually love beet jerky. My wife gave me beef jerky for Valentine's Day and I hugged her and I said, "You love me so much." Such a bond. Um, but we'd love to hear from you [POINTS AT AUDIENCE], by the way, and what you love.

Rob: What does Lee love? [POINTS AT LEE] What do you love?

John: Yeah. [LOOKS AT LEE]

Lee: Oh, I love food, any kind of food, lots of it. Food. Food. Food.

Rob: If you could have your favorite food for lunch today, what would it be?

Lee: Oh, my.

Rob: This can be a

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Lee: Meat and potatoes.

Rob: Meat and potatoes.

Lee: Yeah! [MAN IN AUDIENCE YELLS OUT "MASHED"] Mashed potatoes, yes. [THE MAN LAUGHS; LEE POINTS AT HIM] See, he doesn't even need to text, you just say it. We love that.

John: [LOOKING AT HIS PHONE] Len loves French cooking, so he's specific, he likes French cooking – so German cooking [SHAKES HIS HEAD AND WAVES OFF WITH HIS HAND] [LAUGHTER/CROSSTALK].

Lee: Any other one responding there?

John: We've got a lot of food, apparently we're very hungry; a lot of family stuff going on.

Lee: That's why I love this [INAUDIBLE/CROSSTALK].

Rob: Chick-fil-a?

John: Chick-fil-a.

Lee: Do you know I always try to go Chick-fil-a on a Sunday, why is that? I want to go to Chick-fil-a on a Sunday. [LAUGHTER] I'm like, *Did they go out of business? No, it's Sunday.*

Rob: It happens all the time.

Lee: It's awesome.

John: I just want to say I love my wife. [LOOKS AT LEE] Yeah, good job. [ROB BURSTS INTO LAUGHTER]

Lee: I should have said that! I'm sorry, it's Valentine's Day. I should have done better at that.

Rob: [ABRUPTLY STOPS LAUGHING] Me, too.

Lee: You know, I love [ROB AND JOHN START LAUGHING AGAIN, LEE LOOKS AT THEM] – yeah, but your wife's not in the room.

Rob: Yes, she is.

Lee: Is she?

Rob: My sweetheart.

Lee: You have no idea where she's at.

Rob: [ROB POINTS TOWARD BALCONY] She's up there.

Lee: She's somewhere around here.

You know, one of the things we hope that you're doing here at Calvary is that you just enjoy being together. One of the things that's most fun for me is I step out in the lobbies and you all are laughing with each other and talking. It's why we try to have the coffee and this kind of thing out there because it's just, we believe that as we learn to love each other it's a huge deal. Well, I was hoping we could do for a moment this morning, as we were talking this week we looked at a whole bunch of Scriptural passages and said, "What one would we read that would just have a lot to say?" And there are so many, but we found that one of Jesus' disciples, John, when he described what Jesus would say he just kept on talking about love, and that's John.

And so if you have your Bible, would you turn to 1st John, I am going to read a little bit of a lengthy section of Scripture because we here, we're always saying we're a people of The Book and we believe that the Word of God speaks to us in a powerful way. I'm going to try not to rush it. We will put it on the screen for you this morning, but I'm not going to try to rush it. I would like for you to let the Word of God speak to you today, and we know that the Word of God will convict and really connect with your heart. So 1st John, so it's really at the really back end of

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your Bible right before the book of Revelation, you'll see 1st-2nd-3rd John, and so let's look right there, real small books, 1st John Chapter 4, verse 7, and it starts out with the word "beloved."

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God,

— Did you catch that? Let's love each other because love is from God. By the way, that – if you're gonna take a theme out of today – is if you love God then you're gonna love each other. If you don't love each other, you probably don't love God, and the two just keep going back and forth together. If you wanna, um, have a little fun after this service start back at the beginning of 1st John and read through the whole book and just capture all of these conversations about love. One of the things we were talking about after our first service, we kept on getting questions coming in after the service and I'm glad because what that means is there's just a lot of thoughts going on in our minds. Let these Scriptures roll around in your minds, but you're going to just see this all the time—if you love God, you'll love each other; if you love each other, you'll love God. So let's keep on reading:

and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because

— you see those next three words? It says:

God is love.

— let's say it together: 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.

— you see, it just keeps on saying it, and that's what you hear over and over. That's good, we want to get this into our head. Verse 12:

¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

— oh, that's a process. Verse 13:

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.

– 1 JOHN 4:7-21 (ESV)

Rob: Boom! Man, that's an amazing, amazing passage.

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Lee: We ought to just pray and close.

Rob: We really could.

Lee: Or just read it again and pray and close.

Rob: You know, just think about this, church. Imagine if we were known as a church that loved, think how that would change everything; that would change our entire community, loving one another, loving the community around us. It's funny, like, we throw around love all the time, it's the sort of thing you put on a little candy heart, you know, and you think it's all cute. But love is profound, love is deep biblical love, if we're a church that was known to biblically love one another and love anybody who walks in our doors—earth shattering—if we actually read that Scripture and lived it out. If that's the only Scripture we even knew, that would profoundly change the world. It would change our entire community, change our lives. It's an amazing topic.

Lee: I was thinking this week that this subject of love is one of those things we're all looking for love in our lives and there always seems to be something missing there, because certain relationships that love isn't quite perfect. But really, what we're looking for is that love of God and when we reach out to that love of God then we really see love completely fulfilled in our lives.

Rob: Yeah.

Lee: Let me ask you this question, I'm gonna throw out a bunch of questions to you two right now [LOOKS OUT AT AUDIENCE] and to you, so text in, write it in the column, send it to these guys.

Rob: We'll be watching, please text.

Lee: Okay. Seriously, we'll see if we get any of your answers, or even if you want to just give a one-liner like I'm going to give; so I'm going to give a bunch of one-liners here, if you think of any you can add to this. Um, someone out here says, "I'm falling in love" – what's your response to them?



Rob: [MOTIONS TO JOHN] John. [ROB'S LAUGHS]

Lee: Rob's like that in our staff meetings, he's always doing that, he's picking on someone. You should be glad he doesn't do that when he preaches, he'll look at YOU. He put me on the spot first hour and I didn't know the answer to that question, it was terrible.

Rob: It was a great moment.

Lee: I'm still bitter about that.

Rob: It was a wonderful moment.

Lee: It was a horrible moment.

John: So I gotta be profound.

Lee: Yeah, you're stuck but I bought you some time at least. You [INAUDIBLE – CROSSTALK/LAUGHING] do that to me first hour.

John: So we're getting some questions in [LEE AND ROB BURST OUT LAUGHING] this very simple subject. So, no, but honestly we have some very [PAUSES] so it's the idea of how do you love, like, how do you [PAUSES] so God is love, we are to love like God, but how do we do that?

Lee: Yeah.

John: And I always say if you say my feelings are changing, that's not godly love.

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Lee: Yeah.

John: But I always ask people this question, I'm like, "Say whatever you're saying in the scenario of God and you. So if God would say, you know, I'm falling out of love with you,"

Rob: Mmm, good one.

John: or, you know, "I don't have the same feelings as I used to have for you" – is that godly love or would that be outside of His character because we are to love like He loves? And so I would simply say that's conditional, that's worldly, it's not biblical. And the idea of that is you never loved them in the first place, you love what they gave you or how they made you feel. And for us as believers we are to love like God loves. So I always just, in my mind when I think something, I'm always like, *Would I hold God to that same standard that I'm holding that other person?* – in that if God would love me like that, did He really love me? And so it's the same question – right? – as we're looking at the horizontal relationship. So, again, I would say that's worldly love not godly, that's conditional not unconditional, just my initial thought.

Lee: So would the same thing be the case if you say, "I just don't feel loved by you anymore"?

John: Hmm.

Rob: You know, I – the feeling of love is valid, there's a feeling, there's a love, but that's not what pulls the train down the tracks. The love is like the caboose. It's the fact, it's the Gospel, it's biblical love, it's the love of God that pulls the train down the tracks, you don't actually need the caboose for the train to keep on moving, but if it's there it's great. The feeling of love is something that will come later, but to base everything on a feeling you've got it backwards and that nothing else, biblical love is not based on a feeling.



Lee: Yeah, and I read some studies this week that talked about there's actually a certain period of time when those feelings go away, so what's left after those feelings?

Rob: Yeah.

John: Yeah, and I think about, too, like in my life because some of these questions that are coming in are really – *how do you define biblical love, like, what does that look like?* As we just kind of read over really what that is, but I always think in my life if I say who loves me the most in this world, I would say are the people who have seen the worst in me and still love me. So my wife, my mom, these are people that, because every time I do pre-marital counseling – right? – it's always this idea of what you're committing to is: I will see the worst in you and I'm sticking around. So it's that condition of saying, "Listen, it's unconditional. I'm not going to not love you based on your actions." And I think for us biblical love is—to your point, Rob—is deeper than worldly love, it's a deeper – so it's part of, you know, there's feelings and there's emotions but it's deeper.

Rob: I keep on thinking that we've been duped as Americans especially,

John: Absolutely.

Rob: This is our Hollywood culture, we've been duped to think of love as something less than what it is. Hollywood values love and our culture talks about love all the time, but they don't value it high enough.

John: Right.

Rob: They keep it way low and way shallow based on feelings; feelings are just really a small part of a much bigger picture.



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Lee: Let's drill down on that a little bit further because just saying, "I love you" or I love a person, those words—and probably some of you have even heard yourself in your head say out loud in your head, "No, you don't"—you ever have someone come up before they say something really mean to you, they like to start out, "Now, you know I love you"? It's like, "Oh, gosh, here it comes." Right? By the way, it's easy to love certain people, so anyone that you happen to do something for Valentine's Day today, I mean, it's easy to love on them, you sent them a card, it's easy, but think about the person you didn't send a valentine today to that's not so easy to love.

And I think that sort of comes to the question that what we're going to hear from a lot of you, or maybe what you're saying is being asked right now, is what about that person that I don't feel that love to and I don't want to love, and God says I need to love them. If I don't love my brother whom I have seen, how is it that I can see God? Help us, Rob, can you help us a little bit

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.

– 1 JOHN 4:20-21 (ESV)

Rob: Yeah.

Lee: with when they're asking that question that you just said there a minute ago, God kind of love, can you sort of drive into that a little bit?

Rob: Yeah, the passage, the verse that sticks out to me in this passage is verse 7¹ where it says, "**Beloved, let us love...**"—beloved really saying, choosing the same word *agape*, you who are loved. Friends, if you're a Christian you received Christ, you who are loved – you are loved – love one another. Love isn't an easy thing. Love is actually – it takes a lot of work. There's a lot that goes into the idea of love, it's not just a simple pitter-patter, there's a lot of work. This is what I mean by it, and this is what I mean by "Gospel love."

So we know Romans 6:23² says "**the wages of sin is death,**" why isn't my going back to wages in sin and death in the midst of love? [LEE LAUGHS] Okay, I'll get there in a second, hold on, just listen. Wages of sin, the consequences of sin is death, *meaning* you say the f-word one time—spiritual death—that's the consequence. You steal one candy from the store—spiritual death. You lie once—spiritual death. Seems kind of unfair but listen, this is the beauty of the Gospel, this is – let me explain to you.

Lee, can I borrow your phone? I'll borrow Lee's top of the line phone here.

John: [LAUGHING] I'm glad you asked for his. [ROB LAUGHS]

Rob: Yeah, I'll use this one. Okay. So let's imagine I just borrowed Lee's phone, he's got an iPhone, and, uh, accidentally I drop it and I break it, destroy it, or even worse, I throw it on the ground and I smash it [STOMPS HIS FOOT] and I get mad at him and I do one of those to it, destroy it. And now I go to Lee, I say, "Hey, Lee, will you forgive me for breaking your iPhone?" Okay, but Lee, you're in the position of God, what are you going to say if – to God – I ask you for forgiveness?

Lee: [LEE LOOKS OUT AT AUDIENCE SPEECHLESS] Yeaah.

Rob: Yes, God, play with me here. So Lee says yes. What's this iPhone worth? How much money you think it's worth? [MAN IN AUDIENCE: "A THOUSAND"] A thousand bucks, probably not Lee's,

¹ Transcriber edit/reference correction: Verse 11 was cited in video, it's actually verse 7: **Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.**

² Transcriber edit/reference correction: Romans 3:23 was cited in video, it's actually 6:23: **For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

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probably like 200 bucks [HE LAUGHS], 150, no, it's probably about a \$500 phone, let's say. Okay. So what Lee is really saying to me when he says, "I forgive you, Rob," is that he'll take \$500 out of his own pocket to pay for this broken phone, because if Lee said, "Rob, I forgive you but give me \$500," that's really not forgiveness. We learned just earlier Romans 6:23 said the wages, the consequences of sin, the payment of sin is death. The payment for a broken iPhone is 500 bucks. What did Jesus do for us? He died—the payment for sin is death—and Jesus died for us. Love isn't just a pitter-patter thing. Biblical love is a great cost; to love others there's a great cost involved in that. Thank you for letting me borrow your phone.



Lee: So Rob, the question then would be that I got asked in the lobby in-between services was, "How high does that cost go?" I mean, I had some people saying, "I don't know if I'm not beyond that place of that cost."

Rob: Hmm.

Lee: Someone said to me, "I'm not God."

John: You know, we're getting a lot of these questions, too, of the idea of, like, I got a couple questions of, "Does God still love this person?" based on what they've done. Right? So the idea of God loving us despite who we are, like who we really are, is a hard thing to understand. Right? It's a hard thing to say, "Can somebody truly love somebody unconditionally?" Like, even that idea it's hard for us because we can't do that. Like, no, you are not able to love somebody unconditionally. You're not able to do what we're asking you to do, but this is where the power of the Gospel comes in,

Rob: Yeah.

John: because the Bible never says that you are able to, it says *He is*. So the idea is the Spirit of God is going to have to teach me how to love this way, so I have to start to fall in love more and more with God so that I can love the way He loves. And so the idea is it's hard for us to think that God doesn't see us the way we see ourselves and we see other people,

Rob: Yeah.

John: and that's where the idea of God *is* love, like, when I read this passage I remember that just, that just knocked me.

Rob: God is love, that's profound.

John: He IS. Period. [INAUDIBLE CROSSTALK]

John: He defines love. And so that was one of the questions here, too, is it's so hard for us because love – a lot of people are saying, you know, in the English language love is so broad, it's too broad, but in other languages, in the Hebrew and the Greek, they actually have a specific word for this type of love we're talking about, God's love for us. And I would argue that's what makes Christianity different. Right? It's God's pursuing love of us, rather than us trying to figure out a way to love God. He loved us, He pursued us, and it's receiving that love which, again, you think of other religions, God doesn't love active, it's a passive or a workspace, and we can kind of identify with that, we understand that, but this type of

4 TYPES OF LOVE

STORGE AFFECTION LOVE BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS	PHILIA FRIENDSHIP LOVE BETWEEN FRIENDS
EROS ROMANCE LOVE BETWEEN MARRIED PEOPLE	AGAPE UNCONDITIONAL THE LOVE OF GOD

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steadfast, unconditional love, I mean, in the Greek and in Hebrew it's talking about God in Scripture. Right? So in the Old Testament when God is continuing to forgive His people who rebel against Him, who worship false idols, but yet He's continuing to love them and forgive them and provide for them and show them the path that He has for them. And they said this type of love is not, it's a specific word, is it – how do you say it, Lee?

Lee: Agape. Or [INAUDIBLE CROSSTALK] in the Old Testament.

John: And it's the specific word where in the English language we really have one, but there's different types of love and we're getting a lot of questions about that.

Lee: So I was thinking about what you're saying there, too, is, I loved in the passage we just read, it says:

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

– 1 JOHN 4:13 (ESV)

So when we get saved and we put our trust in Jesus, He gives us His Holy Spirit because that's the problem, this is only a God kind of love. That's what you just said, agape kind of love, I can't do this.

John: Right.

Lee: But, that's why, in fact, in Chapter 3 just before this, if you look ahead of it, it says this is my commandment, love Jesus and then love each other:

²³ And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

– 1 JOHN 3:23 (ESV)

Because if you love Jesus, God's given you His Spirit, now I can love you. I mean, this isn't, like, you and I can't make this happen. That's why the world can love who they like and then destroy who they don't like, but with the Spirit of God this is when the world looks in at us and says, "Wow, that is crazy how they love each other." And to me that's one of the beauties of this local church is that we're in this process of learning how to love each other so we can model it so that when we step out of this room we can put that into practice together. It's hard stuff.

Rob: You know, what I was thinking about that question earlier, that little phone conversation I was having with you and I used the example you say the f-word once, come on, we all know that we're much more terrible, like, the depth of sin and the offense that we've had against God just running, fleeing from God, turning from God is much worse than just saying the f-word once. And so, yet He still pursues us, like you [LOOKS AT JOHN] were talking about, it's like our worst enemy who's killing our children and destroying us, yet He still goes out of His way to love us and that's beloved, that word beloved, you are loved. That's the basis of it all.

Lee: Let me think out loud about something here a minute, see if you can help me with this and I'll put you on the spot, which is what you did to me last hour and I didn't know the answer, so I'm going to stick it back to you this time.

Rob: And it might deflect right off of John.

Lee: Yeah, John, and then we'll say, do like a good teacher, "What do the rest of you think?" [THEY LAUGH] John, the Apostle John, made the comment in the book of John, not 1st John but the book of John, um Chapter 13, verse 34, he says:

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³⁴ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another:

— and then He says:

just as I have loved you,

— that's what Jesus says love one another just as I have loved you:

you also are to love one another."

– JOHN 13:34 (ESV)

Can you think of some examples where the disciples really stuck it to Jesus and He had to love them?

Rob: Sure, oh, yeah. There's the garden right there where they just denied him, where Peter denied him three times instead of following Him, and so just completely denied even knowing Him.

Lee: It's a category actually of issues we have with love with people. [TO JOHN] Anything come to your mind?

John: Yeah, so in the disciples' way I think the disciples love Jesus the way man loves Jesus, and so everything from not only, like, like the way they said they loved Jesus was a selfish love. So if you look at the New Testament

Rob: Yeah.

John: it was I love you because you're going to give me a lot of stuff. Right?

Rob: Who's the best? I want to be [INAUDIBLE CROSSTALK].

Lee: Here He is dealing with this conversation *who's going to get my right hand?*

John: Yeah.

Rob: Yeah.

John: And so it was – and He knew that, He knew that it was a conditional

Lee: So there's this posturing going on.

John: Absolutely, but yet He challenged that, He managed that but He also, again, He didn't. So again, we're getting all these questions about, you know, what do we do when somebody is unqualified for our love? Like, it – can you be unqualified for God's love? And I think, again, this is a, this is a tough thing to – like, I would argue one of the biggest flaws of our culture and our faith in this area is that we don't actually understand God's love for us. We struggle with it.

Rob: Yeah.

John: And because of that we feel guilt and shame over joy and peace because we struggle with the idea of yes, but it's conditional. I know God loves me but He wouldn't love me if He knew this, or He couldn't love me, or He wouldn't expect me to love somebody else if He knew this. But, like, God is waiting to say, "Okay, you're just one bad decision away and you're losing it." And I think that's, honestly, that's why we fight for marriages in the church. I think that's why we fight for marriages because we understand that God's love is greater than condition.

Rob: I wonder if we as Americans really have like a disability in understanding unconditional love because – have you guys ever heard this, like, as a country they look at us as Americans and say, "Yes, they're very affluent but they're very alone"? Like, there's no real community, there's no

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
– ROMANS 5:8 (ESV)

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real depth of commitment, the family units are broken apart, very independent, you know, American attitude, and so I think that we might have a little handicap even in understanding the,

John: Yeah.

Rob: like, the depths of love that really can exist in a relationship.

John: And in the text it teaches us that the problem is actually the pursuit of God. Like, as we understand and pursue God, this love that's hard to understand without the Spirit, grows in us

Rob: Yeah.

John: and then it grows and how – so I always say, and we talked about this last time, that's why, like, if you're thinking that it's somebody else's fault in anything in your life that is the enemy because God says no-no-no, I want you to pursue Me and think about the ways that you can love better rather than do they deserve it. And so we just play this game where we love that God loves us unconditionally, but we don't care if we love others conditionally, and I think God is calling that out in this in a practical way to say no-no-no, if you truly understand and you pursue this love I have for you, it's gonna come overwhelm you to love others that same way.

And so you can't say it's my wife's fault, or my husband's fault, or this is impossible if you understand that God's love for you is steadfast and unconditional; you can't say that if you're gonna receive this type of love. And so He's calling out the idea that I am love, the more you know of Me, the more you're gonna be able to know of this.

Rob: I thought about it this way, you know, it's like Jesus—in the example of Jesus and the church being like the husband and wife—if there was a job description written, you know, the church forsakes Jesus all the time and [INAUDIBLE], not that it's good but the church always forsakes Jesus. If Jesus had a specific job description just like the husband in a marriage, but just like all of us who want to love like Jesus, the job description of Jesus as it relates to the church would say you never forsake the church ever. You always pursue. You—it's going to hurt—yet you follow that, you go after the church. That's the same thing between husbands and wives, that's the same thing amongst us all. Just like how much it cost for Jesus to love others, just kind of understand that. It's a dupe from America telling you that love is a pitter-patter thing—love costs

John: [QUIETLY] Yeah.

Rob: it takes a lot to put into love to continue to love and pursue other people.

John: [LOOKING AT HIS PHONE] So guys, this is a very real question kind of, again, when you hear this I think we get it, but then there's the sinful broken world that we live in. So one of the questions I think is so good is, you know, we understand that we are to love people but what about if that, if we're in an abusive relationship

Rob: Yeah.

John: or, you know, the world is sinful and we need to create boundaries, how do we love that way in the midst of sinful people around us and their love towards us.

[ROB LEANS OVER TOWARD JOHN, "ASK LEE THAT QUESTION," THEN HE LAUGHS]

Lee: Thank you so much.

[INAUDIBLE CROSSTALK/LAUGHTER]

John: But it's an honest question. Right? [INAUDIBLE CROSSTALK/LAUGHTER] I want to love my husband, but they're not loving me, and they're loving me in a way that's dangerous to me, how do you love in that world?

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- Lee: Well, and we talk about this all the time because we come across so many of you that find yourself in those situations, we don't even know the beginning of it so we never want to recommend you step into a place where you're getting hurt and that kind of thing, so we're like very, very cautious on that. Even if we have to step back or step out of the way to protect ourselves or our kids physically, this kind of thing, there is a decision we make that I'm not going to hate this person. It goes back to this I have been so greatly forgiven, how can I do that? And, again, that's why we go back to the whole issue of the Spirit here is I don't know that, I don't know how we do that. I don't know how I forgive someone like that. You know, I hear it with some of these people that get, you know, their – a loved one gets murdered by someone and then they go in the courtroom, you've heard all those stories, and they go, "I forgive you." I'm just like, okay, [THROWS UP HIS HANDS] I don't know how you do that.
- John: Yeah.
- Lee: And I know how they do that because it's only through the Spirit of God that they can do that. Now obviously they're not showing up in a place where this person can have their way with them again, you make sure we're – *I'm not going back into that scenario with this person again*, but for certain God has forgiven us. How do we work at loving fully this other person?
- Rob: There's a real temptation in this moment to start feeling overburdened now by the idea of love.
- Lee: Yes.
- Rob: Just feeling like, *Oh, man, that's a lot of work. I'd rather just stay alone. I'd rather just not have anyone around me.* But for all of us acknowledging that we don't have it within ourselves to love. That's where Lee keeps on talking about the Holy Spirit and the third person of the Trinity, that God has given us riches beyond riches, spiritual riches. The moment you become a Christian you're sealed with His promised Holy Spirit. The seal is a picture of the signet ring of a king where the king puts his seal on you and says, "You are mine," and He gives you spiritual riches.
- This is the secret of Christianity, as far as I'm concerned. On a daily basis waking up, moment by moment, giving up control to the Lord and saying, "Lord, I need your Spirit." He commands us to be filled with the Spirit and He promises that He'll do anything according to His will. So when you ask to be filled, when you're in those tough moments, when you do need to forgive, when you do need to pursue, Jesus is there with riches and by faith you can accept that Spirit. And it may be every five minutes you need to spiritually breathe, exhale, "Lord, I give control," inhale, "Lord, give me your Spirit." Many of my days I don't start a day without spiritually breathing. I don't know how to make it through a day without His Spirit.
- John: That's good.
- Lee: You know, I sit here watching John's phone as it scrolls [THEY LAUGH], you guys are popping up the questions and he's trying to sneak a peek at that.
- Rob: Somebody loves schnitzel. [JOHN AND ROB LAUGH]
- Lee: All right. Good. Okay. Um, as I watch that I'm just reminded, I just – it's the thing the three of us have struggled with as we've talked about the subject of love this week. And we know love is from God, God is love, and our relationship with God we love each other, and yet it's so incredibly hard. And I just recognize that with us in this room, up there on the balcony, those of you online, and I know for us we would just like to take a moment and tell you we feel that, we're struggling with that, figuring that. I think one of the things we stopped this week because we were thinking about, you know—How do I love this person? How do I love that person?

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How do I love in this situation?—and we even stopped and stepped back at one point and asked ourselves, like, okay, there's people I haven't loved well. I haven't – people that are feeling that way about me. And so we're sitting here in a situation as a people wanting to be a loving people, we know there's some people it's easy to be loving towards and there's moments that it's easy to be loving. We also know that there's some situations each of us are going, "I don't know. I just don't see it. I don't feel it. I can't get there."

Lee: Here's what I just leave you with today, would you just consider allowing this Scripture that we read today from 1st John 4, just read it over a few times maybe later on the day, maybe this week, in your devotions, just take a moment and get up in the morning and read it and just let the Word of God do its thing in you? Like I said, three dudes talking about love is, uh, especially these three [THE THREE OF THEM LAUGH], when we decided to do this I didn't realize how hard it would be, I just feel like a fish out of water. But I think probably the reality is that's probably the case with most of us on this subject, and I've realized this week this is just so much deeper. And yet when I step back and I go God is love and I think, like I said the chapter before it says love Jesus, put your trust in Jesus and then love each other, we're gonna have to grab and hold onto God real hard. We're gonna let His Word wash over us and just bring that healing that is needed. I just want to pray for you right now because we talked about this, we know that this opens up so many things from past relationships to family issues that are out there, to marital things that have gone on, things that are going on at this very moment with your adult kids. And some of you are feeling, just by having to think about this right now, beat up; it was hard enough to come here on Valentine's Day and then to have this open up. That's not what the Scripture is trying to do to you. You have a great God who loves you and I would like you to be embraced by that love right now because when you're embraced by that love God is love, I think it's going to change the way you're able to share that love with someone else. And you may before you engage in this thought have to go back and read this 1st John passage over and over, so I want to just invite you into the love of God right now; not into condemnation in the slightest, not into pain, but into the healing that only God in His Spirit will bring. So I just invite you to bow your head in prayer, I'm just gonna pray for you.

Jesus,

I pray that You would meet each one right where they're at; for the person that probably is struggling with abuse or has that this just opened up that door, they're crying out. And Lord, those of us in this room, many of us don't understand that and there's someone else in this room who does and wishes they could just grab and hug that person a lot. Lord, we know that there are people in this room that there are people that they had loved so much at one time and that relationship is just so far away. Lord, I wish I had some word to say today that just would fix that in a second, so we come to You, the God of love, and I ask that Your love would surround each person opening up their heart to receive it right now.

When I read those words it's my command that You put your trust in Jesus and love each other, somehow Lord we know Your Spirit's going to move in a powerful way. So would You minister to each person in this room right now? Lord, I pray for a breakthrough today, a breakthrough that is going to require someone to lower their own pride and just reach out in the love of Jesus because You did it for us for something way more, the sin in our lives was way greater than anything anyone's done to us.

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So Lord Jesus we love You. As a church we want to be a church that loves You, we want to be a church that loves each other. Lord, I pray that we'll be able to grow in that and I pray that You'll teach us in this room to do that. I pray that You'll teach us in our small groups to do that, and I pray that You'll help us be forgiving like You're forgiving. We love You Jesus. It's in Your Name we pray. Amen.

Rob: Hey Lee and John, love you guys.

John: I love you. [ROB LAUGHS]

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