

Sermon: A Life of Love

Text: 1 John 4:1-21

Discussion Questions:

Way back in the day—both in junior high and high school—I acted in several school plays. They're actually very fond memories. It was a lot of fun to spend all of that time preparing and rehearsing, and then to take the stage in front of a packed house (at least in my idealized memories) and "bring the house down"!

- Have you ever been in a play or a dramatic production? Did you enjoy it? Any funny stories that you can share with your group (such as forgetting your lines and having to ad-lib!)?

One of the questions that drama coaches teach aspiring young actors to ask is: "What's my motivation?" In acting, your motivation is the reason you—as the character—say the words the playwright wrote and move where the director tells you to move. It's the reason you DO what you do on stage.

In the same way, God calls each of us to consider this same question of motivation. We are called by God to be motivated by love at all times.

- Thinking about this question of motivation—which do you think is a more powerful motivator—love, fear, or hate? Why?
- What popular figure alive today or from history used hate to motivate people?
- Who can you think of (apart from Jesus) who used love as a motivator?
- When have you been motivated by love?

Examination:

- Read **John 4:1-6**
 - The first three paragraphs of 1 John 4 (twice in the 3rd paragraph) begin with John addressing his readers as "Dear friends," or "Dear children." Why do you think he does this?
 - Verse 1 talks about false prophets, false spirits and false messages. When you think about our current culture—who are some of the primary false prophets, and what false message are they proclaiming?
 - When John talks about "testing the spirits," what do you think he means?
 - Why is the acknowledgement of Jesus the litmus test for what is from God?
 - Does it give you comfort knowing that the Spirit that we have "in us" as children of God is greater than the spirit that is "in the world" (v. 4)?
 - Who is the "they" and "them" in verse 5?
 - Based on the logic of verse 6, what makes it possible for an unsaved person to be open to the message of the Gospel?
 - Give some examples of "the message of falsehood" that the spirit of the antichrist spreads.

- Read **John 4:7-12**
 - What are the readers of 1 John encouraged to do (v. 7)?
 - What do you think John means when he says that “love comes from God”?
 - Is it possible to truly love—and NOT be born again (in other words, is loving something that only saved people are capable of)?
 - If it’s true that everyone who loves has been born of God—is it also true that everyone who is born of God loves?
 - What is the relationship between loving and knowing God (vv. 7-8)?
 - What’s the difference between saying that “God is love”—and saying that “God is loving”?
 - How did God show His love (v. 9)?
 - What was God’s PURPOSE in sending Jesus into the world? How does this “fit” with John’s ultimate purpose in writing The Gospel of John (John 20:30-31)?
 - What is love (v. 10)?
 - If loving God isn’t love—then what is it?
 - Why did God send His Son?
 - Why should Christians love one another (v. 11)? Why does it matter that God went first?
 - If the WAY that God showed His love to us serves as an example—HOW ought we then to love one another? How high did Jesus set the bar?
 - What do you think it means that “no one has ever seen God” (v. 12)? Is this true?
 - What is the result of loving one another?
 - What does it mean for love to be made “complete” in a person?

- Read **1 John 4:13-21**
 - How can believers know that they live in God and God lives in them (v. 13)?
 - Read 2 Corinthians 1:22 in light of 1 John 4:13. What do they have in common?
 - What did John testify concerning (v. 14)?
 - What power or authenticity does it lend John’s testimony that he was also an eyewitness to everything he says?
 - What happens when we acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 15)?
 - How do we rely on the love God has for us (v. 16)?
 - Why is love important (vv. 16-17)?
 - How is love made complete (v. 17)?
 - Take a moment, and as a group—memorize the last 7 words of verse 17 (NIV).
 - What does perfect love do? Why? (v. 18)
 - Why should we love (v. 19)? Are there any other reasons?
 - What’s the relationship between loving God & loving one’s brother (vv. 20-21)?
 - What do you think it means here to “hate” a brother? Are we allowed to “not like” others—if we manage to keep this dislike from turning to hatred?
 - How significant is the word “must” in verse 21?

Application:

- Who is someone that you have a difficult time getting along with that God needs to help you love?
- What fear will you ask God to help you overcome?
- What specific steps will you take this week to demonstrate your love for another believer?