11/15/2026 - Walking in the Love of God: Loving Radically

Text: 1 John 4:20–21 (within 4:7–21) · **Also read:** Matthew 5:43–48; Romans 5:6–11; Romans 12:14–21; Romans 8:18

Key verse: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar ... whoever loves God must also love his brother." (1 John 4:20–21)

The Big Question

Are there limits on whom we are called to love? Scripture's answer is **no** — we are to love everyone with a selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love. The harder question is **how**.

Opening story: Hamid Banday grew up a persecuted Christian in a 99% Muslim Pakistani village. After coming to Jesus he still hated his persecutors, but as he shared the Gospel alongside a pastor, God changed his heart. Today he lives among and loves the very people who once mistreated his family.

Part 1: Yes — Love Everyone

- **1 John 4:8** — Anyone who does not love does not know God. Not loving reveals a disconnect from knowing (abiding in) God.
- **1 John 4:20–21** — Claiming to love God while hating a brother makes us a liar. "Brother" is inclusive, not a loophole. John wrote to a church tempted to be "spiritual" without acting like Jesus.
- **Matthew 5:43–48** — Jesus: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. John heard these words firsthand.

Part 2: How Do We Do It?

1. **See the love of God in the work of Jesus.** Romans 5:6–11 describes who God loved: the *weak*, the *ungodly*, *sinners*, and *enemies* — and Christ died for us anyway. John isn't handing us an impossible task; he's saying we can't do this without Jesus, and because we have His love, we can.
2. **Know that God fights for you in injustice.** God sends sun and rain on the just and unjust (Matt. 5:45) and holds the consequences in His hand. Practically, loving a hard person may mean refusing retribution, praying for them (even from a distance), and speaking of them kindly. Do what is right and let God deal with what is wrong — including our own part (Rom. 12:16–21).
3. **Pray for perspective in the struggle.** The rope illustration: eternity is an endless rope; this life is a small piece at the end, and our conflict is a dot on that piece. It is real and significant, but eternity should reshape how we see it (Rom. 8:18). If we will spend eternity with a fellow believer, why not learn to love them now?

Discussion Questions

1. Do you see any exceptions in 1 John 4:8 or 4:20–21 about whom we must love? Why might we look for them?

2. Why does John link loving people we see with loving God whom we haven't seen?
3. In Romans 5:6–11, which description of "us" (weak, ungodly, sinners, enemies) hits you hardest? Why?
4. What is the difference between loving someone who wronged you and excusing what they did?
5. How does trusting God with justice free you to love?
6. Who is a hard-to-love person in your life, and what is one way to love them this week?

Takeaway

Are we to love all? **Yes.** How? **See** the love of Christ, **know** God fights for us, and **pray** for an eternal perspective that makes room to love those who are hard to love.