

# THE BIG AND BOLD LOVE OF JESUS

*1 John 3:18-24*

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Shaun Garman

1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 18 - 24

Good morning, Doxa. This morning we're going to be reading 1st John 3, verses 18 through 24. And it reads, "Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed, and in truth. By this, we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him. For whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God. And whenever we ask, we receive from him because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 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. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us by the spirit whom he has given us." This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Pastor Eddie Williams: Well, hopefully you all have been enjoying the Ezra series. We are going to take a pause from that for this week and maybe that's much needed, but it's been a great series. And we actually have a pleasure to hear from a guest speaker today. And quick story about this guest speaker. Just a few years ago, I was at a conference and I went to a random breakout session that I was not sure who the speaker was and I popped in. And at the time I was thinking about, you know, moving my family to a city, to start a church. And I heard this speaker speak on his calling and leaving one ministry to go to another and what that meant for him and the powerful wave and movement it meant in his life for him to just take that risk and to go. And he probably doesn't remember this, but I walked right up to him afterward and I said, you just convinced me to leave where I live to move across the country and sell everything to go start a church.

And now he's here at Doxa and you get to hear from him. So I'm going to introduce Shaun Garman. He's the Director of Global Partnerships for Acts 29, a church planning network. And Shaun has planted two churches, one in Portland, one in Southern California. He is so smart when it comes to church planning and church ministry stuff. He's incredibly shepherdly. And more than that, for me, he's a friend. Our elders had an opportunity to hang out with him and I

think you're going to benefit greatly from his leadership. So would you give Shaun a hand as he comes up to preach?

Thank you. I don't remember that. I want nothing to do with him moving his whole family. No, I'm just kidding. No, it's awesome to be here. It's awesome to see what the Lord has done with Eddie's family and Sarah coming here, hanging out with your elders yesterday for several hours, I just want you to know what you have, unfortunately is a rarity. You have a healthy church. You have healthy leadership. And it grieves me to say that, but at the same time I'm wanting you to be blessed. I'm wanting you to know that God is in this place and that he's weaving relationships together for his glory. And I hope that you are enjoying that. So I'm going to talk a little bit about the state of the church in the beginning of this message, but right now I want to pray after seeing all these little kids and all this life going on, I want to thank the Lord and thank him for his word before we get into it. So if you'll dunk your heads with me...

Lord Jesus, it is so refreshing to be here, Lord, I'm so thankful for Doxa. Thank you for the things that you're doing. Thank you for the generosity within this people. And in order to be that genuinely generous in the way that they give and serve and live all of life for you, Lord, they have to have been touched by you. They have to know you, Lord. So in some ways I feel like there's evidence of today's message already, and that's an encouragement, but Lord, we can always come before your Word and we want to submit to your word and be washed by it and cleansed by it. And so Lord, as we sang, Be Thou Our Vision, Lord, you are our vision. We love that you've manifested that vision and you're working in, and through this church and in our lives. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for dying on the cross. Thank you that you've made this relationship available with the father. Thank you for being our shepherd, Lord. And we thank you, Holy spirit. Empower me now, Lord. Let this be all about you. We love you so much. Let us hear from your word. In Christ's name, Amen.

So I get to travel a little bit in my job. I used to just do local ministry in Portland, Oregon, and in Ventura, California. I now live in Ojai all of 15 minutes away. I have seven kids, been married 32 years to Daisy. She's a baller. She's an awesome person. I can say that, you know, she really is. And we have six grandkids as well. So all of these kids, this family time-you'll hear one of my stories today-I just get it. You know, life is messy and oh yeah, this thing's going out. Yeah, just when I said messy the tech got messy, but I got a backup mic baby, right here. This is on. I'm here. I'm good. All right. All of you like are production directors. Now this is great. They're like, oh no, we've seen this. Don't worry about it. You're on. Okay. Just settle down, Big Guy, we're good.

But talking about churches and families and faiths, what a rugged road our culture has gone through and not that we've gotten out of it, but one of the results that we've seen is just division, division, division. And we've seen people's faith, I don't know about you, but I have friends where if I'm looking in social media or I'm in conversations, I'm just seeing people chuck big portions of what meaningful, purposeful life with Christ is like. And the culture seems to be invading and deprogramming and deconstructing people on an individual basis. And then of course the plurality of the church body, and we're seeing the church shrink and I see believers

that are insecure and they're dormant in their faith in some ways. And they're intimidated and we can go, well, that's because of this variable-politics, or this variable-people don't really know their theology or people don't know this or that. I do know this, Barna did a research and 49% of people said at churches that I don't know if I can be myself. So whatever your view is, whatever your experience is, or if you've come back, we do have a major problem in that in our church populations, people are wondering. And I see that. I don't know if you see that in Christians, like when you get to know a Christian, you're kind of just poking each other going, do I get to be my real me? Do I get to be myself?

Well half, according to the numbers, according to Barna's research in 2017, half of people at churches go, I don't believe I can be myself. And so those of you who believe you're being yourself, I think that's a tone and that's something we can learn about grace, right? Then the other thing is that 66% of culture believes, and this is no new news, that the American churchgoer is quite hypocritical. And so we're two-faced. And we say one thing and we live another. I don't have to tell you this bad news right out of the gate that it's not fun, right? This is disheartening. It's been really hard to see.

And so what if we could be ourselves? What if the other half said I could be myself? And what if there was a way that we could start to eliminate hypocrisy where people didn't have to say one thing and live another? What would that be? What would that look like? Well, I think today, in the scriptures apostle John is going to tell us, and I'm just going to tell you, it's all about love. We read that. And so I'm saying, no, we don't need to work on the political piece of Christianity. We don't need to work on, you know, do people feel good enough. We don't need to work on the things that we often want to go to, to do the fix. What sometimes we need is a basic and clear review of what the power of the gospel is and what is the motivation of God himself to call his people to himself-and its love.

And so the apostle Paul, after writing the fourth gospel, obviously wrote some epistles to the family of God. They believe he was in what we would say is modern day western Turkey. This also correlates with his writing of Revelation 2 and 3, but his themes, and what we're going to get into today is to obey God. So what he wrote in 1st John, the epistles, is basically obey God and learn how to love brothers and sisters. And what I'm saying today, when we get into this scripture, I think in a very simple way, but I hope you're up for the ride because many times things look simple, but they become quite complex in the gospel, but the simple approach to this scripture I think will show us how, instead of dormant, timid, insecure, faithful people that we all are by obeying God, learning how to love and seeing the big, bold love of Christ can change us. That we can become more secure. We can have more courage in our faith and we can be alive.

Now here's a question that I have for you. Can you just, as you sit here, think of some kind of love in action. When is the last time you encountered a believer that was acting out of love and it was very obvious? For me, it was last night. Nate and his wife had hosted the elder meeting that we had, and they just loved us. There was love in action with the things that were put out-with the drinks and the food that was put out before us. One of the guys had brought his

sprinter van. So we got to go to a winery as a great time out. Those are actions of love. Those were motivated by love. That was serving brothers at that time, but (sorry, sisters) you know, at least the brothers got served there. But what has that looked like for you to see the big, bold love of Christ in your relationships? And when is the last time you saw something and you went, that's absolutely the love of God. Nothing else explains that. That amount of sacrifice, that amount of thinking, that amount of action-that's a fruit of the Spirit. That is not something that just any old neighbor does.

So I ask you this for yourself, though, what is your relationship to the love of God? So, a lot of times I'll talk to people about a gospel "of", like the "gospel of finance". So when I talk to pastors on raising money, really, the first thing I have to do is say, what is your relationship with money before you go speaking about it, what's your relationship? It is. Do you have a healthy relationship with money before you go to raise funds? Or what does it look like in your life? So in this, what does the love of God look like in your life? What is your relationship to God's love? Now that's a weird question, a little bit, like when's the last time... you don't really wake up and go, what's my relationship to the love I'm receiving from you, God. And maybe for some of you, it's like, yeah, I get that. But how do you relate with God's love? Meaning, if God is love, which John wrote, and it's the essence of who God is and his character, and that's what he's dispensing, and we can get that intellectually and we can go, okay, God is love, I get that. And I see that he gives that and out of his character there's that essence, but what is it like for you?

Because I would say there's a scale to it. Some of us sit in God's love like it's a hot tub. Like, we're just like, yeah, I'm basking in this. This is awesome. I love that God loves me. And sometimes that can even get tweaked, right. That can be just like, okay, settle down, Big Guy. Like, what's your action going to be from it? Should you just be in the hot tub and basking in it and then have nothing for somebody else? Do you bask in God's love? Or are you deficient in it? And how you might know one of these and the parlay here, it's not just that you're receiving God's love, it's that you're acting from the truth of God's love. That's the pin today is that if you're receiving God's love, even if you're deficient or whatever amount you're having of it, this scripture's going to say, are you acting from the truth of God's love?

Are there moments in your life where people go, yeah, that's a moment there for her. She was loving in that moment. But the goal would be, no, that Christian's life is marked by the love of God. The things that that person says, the way that they speak, their presence among us is a marking. It's a spiritual in-working and love is being produced from this person. I have a buddy that his hugs alone, and some of you may just cringe right now, you're like, don't want to be hugged. Leave me alone. Maybe that says something about your relationship with love. Okay. Or do you say the word love? If somebody says, hey, I love you. You're like, yeah, yeah, me too. No, but can you actually say, I love you too.

I got a buddy. His name's Mark Halleck. He's like 6'6". He's a huge guy in Denver, Colorado. He's a pastor. When you are loved by him, it is the big, bold love of Jesus. And sometimes with a side of his armpit, he just mothers you. And you're just like nestled, like a little baby was up here. He's just like, I love you. And he loves. He has that. He practices it. He has confidence in the love

of God. He's very comfortable. He's not deficient over here. And he's not just basking in it hedonistically just for himself. And so let's look at this scripture. Let's look at verse 18. "Little children"...I had no idea that we were doing children commissioning today. That is a nice little tie in here. When's the last time you considered yourself somebody's child. I love that. As we dedicate and commission those children, this is the heart that the Lord has over us. "Little children," (that tells us our status, our position) "let us not love in word or talk."

Okay. That goes back to my shrinking statements about the church where people say it's hypocritical. So don't just talk about love. There's got to be some action. There's got to be some, some dirty hands. There's gotta be some skin in the game. This has to be a real thing. You know, that's what the rest of the world's looking for, right? Oh, you say you're loving people, but our reputation is you're imperialistic, you're colonizing. You marginalize people. You're all about your rights and your ways. And you want to put the Bible and the Constitution together. And you're this, this, this, and this.

"Little children, let us not love and word or talk, but in deed, in truth." We've got to get an invitation back to the table so that the voice of Christ through his body is a winsome beautiful thing again. So do this in deed and truth. That's what's going to knock their socks off. Next verse, "By this we all shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him." It's practical. Love is the response to truth. So all of the truth that we know about God, it's not good enough to be intellectual and to say, I know that verse, I've heard a message on this. You know, how many times preachers hear somebody go, well at my last church we heard that message and we did this and that, and we're all like great at Bible study, or we all know a ton of theology, but the outworking of that is the indictment. That's where our discrepancy is. I would say the American church is maybe over-educated. Oh, oh.

We know our orthodoxy and we know our Bible and we preach from the Bible, and we put our nose in here and we look at every word. That's awesome. But if it's not translating to a manifestation of our actions and our words, and it's really, truly not in the DNA of who we are and how we're operating day to day, then it's garbage. It's deceitful. And so what is the response? What is the truthful response? When we hear truth, this is what he's saying, it's like the sensitivity of nerves in your body, like a toothache. You hear that truth. That truth demands action. That truth that's just throbbing, that truth that you were loved, and you received it, and you were saved. You went from an unloving person in a deficit, in an enemy position. This is the gospel, right? The gospel is the truth that we reverberate from, right? We echo, we live out in likeness of our savior. And it is that we were once in a state of unlovable, yet God loved us. We were in a deficit so much so that we were trying to love ourselves. We were working a way to become in a better state, but we were nothing, we were losing, we were hamsters on a wheel. We were constantly trying to pick and choose different forms of lifestyle. You remember, right, who you were before the love of God came and just clobbered you in the most beautiful way, in the way of just the big, crazy love of Jesus Christ when he said, it's you and you couldn't deny it, you went, you got my number and he's loving you in every little articulate, meticulous way that only your soul could be loved.

Do you remember that day? Well, this is what he's saying in light of that truth, and that pulse, that life giving way that God has sent his Spirit to tell your heart, how will you move from that? This is your navigation. This is what's up. Are you picking this up? Is this the truth? This is the truth of this scripture to say, there's no way you can just now go, yeah, God loves me, and I sing a few songs and I give a little bit, and every once in a while, I have coffee with somebody that I don't want to. No, he's like, this is a whole lifestyle. This is the bold existence of a loving Christ follower. This'll change the planet and the world. It did because we saw through one perfect one, and now we're not required to be perfect, but we are being asked and invited and empowered to move away from this sinful selfish way to be a selfless saint. That's what's happening here.

And he's reminding us, he's just saying, this is an inner working. This requires time in the Spirit to be effective. It's impossible to do these things apart from God himself. So they're really great, and that's where we get a lot of shame and guilt. And that's what this scripture talks about. The shame and guilt in your heart when you're in the presence of God that you're like, I live in Suckville a lot of the time, my citizenship sucks, God. Maybe not so much in your kingdom. And so we're very aware of it. And your heart condemns you of that. That's what this scripture says. That's a lot of tension, because you know the things about you that just stink. It's a place where you'd feel ineffective when you read Galatians 5 :22, when you see like, my life is supposed to be marked by these things, this inner working of the Spirit of God. It's supposed to be producing things that I'm not really seeing. You're okay, Little children, Pops has it. Let's keep reading and looking.

Look at verse 19. Really that assurance he says, "For whatever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart. And he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and whatever we ask, we receive from him." Your heart can be at rest. The truth that you know about the gospel, the truth that you know about what God has done for you and his workings, and that we read, and we understand, and we see in one another, we get little flickers of it. We see, oh, this is the truth. This is the way. And we get reminded and encouraged and the church edifies itself and gets built up and rooted in this love. We see that we can have rest. This is a verse of salvation assurance. This is God saying, hey, even though you're in this great tension, he's using John to say, there's assurance. This isn't about you not being saved. This is about a character thing. This is about a call. This is about God's vision for your life.

And so our heart is at rest, when we love, when love comes from the truth. And look at that word, "know." That's because we know the perfect standard. We know the gospel. We know that Jesus is all in on love. In fact, I'll just move to John 15, which I would say this, John who's writing this epistle had heard the sermon on love. He watched it, right, in Christ. So in John 15 verse 12, it says, Jesus is saying, this is my commandment that you love one another as I've loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You're my friends. And so as we're reading what John is giving us, that's his backdrop-is the all-in love of Christ. So he knew Christ. And so Christ is that great bondage breaker. He's the loving liberator. And so let me ask you this as we just sit here and look at these scriptures, how many

acts of love have we rejected because we weren't living out of the Spirit? So the crazy mystery that God dwells in you as you are a temple, you're a dwelling place for the Lord. I think that's what needs to be notched up. If I just look at my own life, I look at my family, sometimes Christians don't seem spiritual.

I live in a place called Ojai, O-j-a-i. It's an hour 15 minutes north of Los Angeles. And it is a concentrated place of polytheism, anything goes, Eastern Yogananda, Krishna. There are cults, very popular cults in my community. And there's something that's undeniable, wherever you go, people are spiritual, and you can feel it. You can feel it. There's a real darkness with it. One of the verses, right? So I want my child to let their light shine before men, right? That this good deed, that it would be in good deeds, that the love would be working. And you see that counterworking in my community. I know we see it in this greater metropolitan area. We know that there's spiritual things. We don't tend to remember that we were given authority. And one of the authorities you were given to break is the non-love.

The fact that from our flesh, this is not a work that we do. It isn't a knowing Jesus and just knowing how well he loves and how all-in he is, but it is us saying, will we be an all in sacrificial lover? Will we stop just knowing the verses and 50 million love verses and will we dwell in the Spirit? Will us as Christians be spiritual beings for love. And that is how people come to Christ, not because we out argued them or we were in the right guy club, or even we had the best theology. I've watched, and actually in my own life, I had terrible theology when I first came to Christ and I in my lifetime, have personally got to be used by God to share the gospel for hundreds of people to come to Christ. That was a work of the Spirit, not of Shaun Garman.

And it wasn't because I was really well read. It was because the Spirit of God kept using me because I kept saying yes. I don't want to be a hypocrite, but I do want to be used by you, Lord. How and when was the last time we said, use me to love. Use me to show your love, please, Lord. As I know you more, let that translate into my life. Where in your life, in the holistic little slices of your life, where does there need to be the marker of love? Is it in your finances? You need to show that these finances were touched and affected by the love of God, by the big love of Jesus Christ. That there's a big God that loves me so entirely. Where would the place of faith and the stretching of your character-so it's not just moments where somebody said, yeah, you were kind of loving there, you were kind of loving there-are you a person that walks into a room wherever on Tuesday at two o'clock and somebody says, that's a loving person? And after time they go, that's love. That's what the quotient here is. That's what we're supposed to be marked as. That's the great commandment that Jesus is giving us. Those people are loving. I don't know a thing about whatever else is motivating them, but I can tell you, they love in such a peculiar and weird way that it just leaves me scratching my temple. That's what the people are looking for, right?

But look at this verse 20, you can have confidence in God's presence. So I would say the first point was practical love is a response to truth. You can write that down if you're a note-taker person, which clearly, I'm not. Practical love is a response to truth. Two, pleasing God is trusting God. When we trust God, that's, what's pleasing to him. He's saying, trust my economy. When I

talk about this love, let's put this in action. Watch how this works. This is better than crypto. This is better than the real estate market on the east side. It really is. This return on investment is that I'll be glorified. People will know me. My kids will come in. And the moniker "my little children", that'll become broader and wider and more diverse. And there'll be more and more of my unadopted children who are living as orphans that will know. And so that's what he's saying. Come, and please trust me. Let me talk about this for a second. And this may get a little bit lewd, but it's so appropriate with the families and what we just did today-being called "little children."

I have seven kids. Five of them are boys. Two of 'em are girls. The boys, at least three of them, and I didn't even remember this story until this week again, but I used to walk...the house would be quiet at times, and I was like, why is it quiet? That's not a good sign. You know, when you could hear the house, it was a 1905 house down in Portland. You'd hear creaking and the house talked more than the people sometimes. And when you heard that you were like, what are the people doing? So as a Pops, I'd go walk around. Sometimes I'd sneak in like, what are you doing? You know, oh, I'm just writing on the wall or whatever they may be doing. But from time to time, I would walk into a room and I couldn't see my son, this happened to three of my kids. And my grandkid has now got the same thing.

Hey, where are you? I smell that you're in the room because he's over in the corner and in the old days, if it was a long time ago, he'd have a newspaper. He'd be just like every other male sitting in here. Like, what are you doing? Why are you in the bathroom so long? So I would walk into the room, have to find my son and there they are in the corner taking a deuce, right? But what would happen is they would have some shame because if they were in potty training, they're like probably not supposed to be in this part of the room, doing this. And here I am. And sometimes I'd walk in the room, true story, and I'd hear, ugh, you know, you hear the grunting, okay? Now you got the picture, right? So you walk in the room, it stinks. They're stinking up the room literally. And they're over in the corner with a little bit of shame. Hey, (one of my boys) Mo, Moses, Moses Freedom Garman, Mo can you come over here? And he pivots almost like an architectural tool.

But right here is what I call the reverse unicorn. A unicorn is supposed to go that way. He's pitching a tent stink. And so he is pulling one of these. And if you're a parent, you've seen this before, it's the weirdest, most odd-looking thing where something's poking completely out of the pants of your kid. Now as a young father, when I would lay that boy down and open up that mess, lay him right there. Sometimes I wasn't lacking judgment. Sometimes I was judging and condemning through my actions. Holy cow, how did you do that? That's unbelievable. Sometimes it would be a shout to Daisy. Daisy, get in here. You're not going to believe this, in hopes that she'd be like, I'll take over.

There the reverse unicorn had laid itself down and there it all is. This is this scripture. The reverse unicorn for us, and all of you have had it, is your sin. Your heart knows and will condemn you for that. And we all sit in the corner going like this. And sometimes we hit each other with it, at missional community, at DNA groups. We go like this, and your sin is stinking up



the room. It's stinking up your relationships. It's getting between you and God. And you're fully aware of it. And God is sitting there. And that's what this scripture says when it says, by this we shall know that we are of the truth. We know the truth. You should have a reassurance in your heart. This is verse 19, part B. There should be a reassurance of your heart before him. But whenever your heart condemns you, when your reverse unicorn has showed up, God is greater and his love is bigger and bolder in Christ Jesus than your reverse unicorn.

God loves you and is cleansing you. And what did it say? What did I say? It is pleasing to God when you trust him. When you trust him. Your heart is condemning you going, I shouldn't be in the presence of God. I shouldn't be around you right now. I just laid a Turkey. I just laid the worst thing out in my life. Or some of you, because this is an internal voice that I think this scripture's calling out, many of us have a criticism. I should never have done that, right? We even heard it on stage. We're not going to be assessing elder Eddie from his high school years. And we're all like, ah ah, ah, because we're like, yeah, we're all total idiots then. Well, you're all total idiots now. And you're especially total idiots if you're not laying it out and in the presence of God just going, wipe me, cleanse me. You guys are like, you put on a jacket to tell that story here up in Redmond, Washington? You loser. I did. Because it's the best story ever. It's called the gospel.

Jesus took your place in that mess. The worst stink, the most foul thing that hurts and breaks and abuses people. He took it on and the father was pleased to have him take that spot. Here's why this is really, really important. If you don't hear anything else I've said... This is how come love does not become practical in an action and the world has not seen it- because we're not receiving it. If you are unable to receive the big, bold love of Jesus Christ in the gospel, if you are unable to receive it, because voices in your head says, can't do that, no, or you're so critical of yourself all of the time, you can't rest assured of your salvation in the presence of God. If you cannot receive love, you cannot give it. That's what the key practical application is. It sounds simple.

I came here to ask you to sit still, to let God wipe your crap up. The years and years that happens between your familial things, your workplace things, the things that are creating hate and not loving you, the things that are continuous. I don't care how much Bible you know, if you don't know that you can sit in God's presence in your dirty diaper, you'll never be able to love. I think righteousness is defined by how well do you receive and give love. When we read 1st Timothy 3, Titus, when we read these qualifications, really all of this says mature Christianity. It's not just for these elders. It's for all of us. And I would say, let's just start at learning how to receive God's love fully. Now, if you can receive God's love and be in God's presence, certainly you can be in each other's presence. But why is that worked the other way around? Why are we so afraid of the judgment of somebody in this room?

We're betraying the gospel. Jesus says, "get behind me, Satan" to Peter because he's betraying the gospel. Don't you dare betray the gospel. Stop taking this into your own hands and continuously creating this. Now God's effective. God's so truthful in his love that he says, I know the truth. I'm not a dummy. I'm an all-knowing God, I know everything, what's in your diaper,

whether you come to me or not. But when you come to me and you let me love you, do you know what happens inside of your heart? This is a spiritual thing, guys. The regenerating of your heart is this-if you sit there and let God do this for you, it breaks something open in your heart. It reveals what's hidden and speaking to you evil, and how satanic and demonic forces are wanting you to go over to the darkness and hide yourself and, you know, pitch your reverse unicorn in private where you think nobody knows where you're at.

All of that garbage of your bondage, your place, where you go, when you're depressed, when you're hurt, when you're tied up, and God says, come before me. And here's what happens in the mystery of the gospel. When you hear and start to understand, and God's love starts working in you, and you're just chilling, you are secure, you're in a secure place, you're in a safe place. You just lay there vulnerably for God. What happens is it breaks open, and it will show what you were hiding and what was being hidden by shame. And what God's love will do is say, let's get that out of there. Let's take care of that so you don't have to live in shame and receive my love. It will reveal what's hidden in your life. You all have something hidden in your life because it's the nature of who we are.

Now, if you are a mature believer and you believe this scripture, and you say, I go before the Lord often, then you know the freedom I'm talking about. And so your liberating love levels are probably very high. But if you're not going before God, it creates an insecurity. And remember how we started this? Why is the church dormant? Why is the church shrinking? Why is the church timid? Because the bold existence that comes after you've been cleaned up and you stand on your own, you're like, I'm clean. I feel great. This is amazing. You've got a pep in your step. I almost went Chris Farley with this. Look it up youngsters. But the point is this, you can be free. Free indeed. The truth sets you free. And when the truth sets you free, you're free to love. And you're free to be cleaned.

You're no longer going to be condemned. And the wrath and the guilt of, of what is true of our position before God, before Jesus shows up and the big bold love of Jesus shows up, he says, I'm greater. God says, this scripture says, everything that's condemning you, we have confidence before God and whatever we ask, we receive from him. Whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater. The big bold love of Jesus is greater. You know that intellectually, but you need to hear it. You need to be liberated. It's an outlandish thing when perfect love casts out fear with whatever your heart is telling you that you can't go to your father through the Son and the workings of the Holy Spirit, that's the garbage. We can't receive God's loving approval over our critical spirit if we can't do that, you'll never love.

How many of you are sitting here right now and you know that this simple message is the lover in me, the loving activist has not been engaged. I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to settle myself down. I don't know how to shut the voice off. I don't know how to get away from the criticism. He says this, right in the backdrop, when I said the John piece where John heard the sermon, and then now John writes the epistle, is all about abiding. And so we need to pray. We need to be with God. The best way to abide is through the Word and through the prayer. But say, Lord, allow this like verse 24, I'm skipping around just because I don't know

how much time I'm going to have. So I want to make sure you get this. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God and God in him. You get back to the relationship of abiding and one of the small, easy things for God to do, the God of the universe is going to pull away what's causing your shame and your guilt and what is enslaving you. And by this, we know that he abides in us by the Spirit whom he has given.

So if I was to back up, look at verse 23 and in his commandment, it's Trinitarian, it's in his commandment, God's commandment that we believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us, we abide in God, God in him, and then at the very end, by the Spirit whom he has given. So God, again, over and over and over again, is trying through these verses to wake our hearts up to say, genuine regeneration, if you're calling yourself a Christian, must bring love into your life. There needs to be more love an increase of love. That's not a burden put on you. That's not work. So don't leave here and try and go, how can I be known this way? How can I do this? One more list. I would just say, when you're with God, when he is cleaning you up, he's giving you a story and you get to tell people, and that's the first way you get to love God and love others is you get to say, God cleaned me up from this.

I have a really dear friend who had an abortion and she's not free. She's carried it for years and years and years. She's just now becoming free from that shame, from that critical spirit of herself, from the way she thought God viewed her. And God's like abortion? First of all, I have that child. Second of all, there's no condemnation in Christ Jesus. I have forgiven you. You've asked for forgiveness and I gave it to you. What is the thing in your mind, in your heart? Where did you just blow it the worst? Where would you be utterly destroyed and embarrassed and have sweaty palms if people knew some of your thoughts or the things that go through your heart. That's where you should go first. The practical piece here is bring all of that to Jesus. And you know what? I'm going to be honest here. I've got like 10,000 other things to say. But I think the best thing I could say is it's a free invite.

The gospel is that you have sin and we all know about it. And our own heart condemns us of it. Our own heart keeps us hiding in corners, keeps us away from God, keeps us away from each other. And so it's condemnable and there is wrath for that sin. But God is trying to remove that sin from you and place it on the cross so you can see that that sin has already been taken care of. You don't need to work yourself out of this. And the death trap that stinks so bad is don't walk around in the carcass of being a sinner. Remember you are a new creation. And so by the love of God you have been newly created. You have to not think about the stink of life and the stench. You have to learn how to walk freely as one who loves, who's been loved by God as a Saint.

And so you get to walk more freely into that. All of this language, all of this love language is also grace language. It's saying that God's saying I got this, and I've got you. I don't know how many of you are in here who do not know Jesus Christ, but I hope you just heard me say, we all have this stink. We all affect each other. There're these things in your soul, and it's not cleaning a diaper. We're talking about cleansing your soul. The stakes are much higher. The joke's a joke.

It's just a tiny little illustration of how much God loves you and how goofy we are to remain in the stink. How ridiculous is it? But we do it. I'm not mad at you. God's not mad at you, Little Children. So some of you may be hearing this message right now and just finding out that you're God's child. You just didn't know that he really would cleanse you and that you could really be in his presence without a condemnation. And without the condemning critical spirit, that's ruling your life. Those words are what's shaping your heart, not God's word.

So until you go to that place, you can know all the Bible in the world, but the words are not shaping your heart and your mind. They're not regenerating your spirit. So we need to obey. Let's be obedient. Let's learn how to be brothers and sisters that love like crazy and are free. And then this is serious business. You should think about this today. You really should. It's got me messed up. It blows my mind every time to think God loves me that much, that he worked through that. I'm more than a conqueror. I'm hypernikao. I'm forever winning because of this love.

So I'm going to pray and I'm telling you who's on my heart now is any of you that are not taking this invitation. And especially for you, if you haven't taken this invitation, not even once, you've never come to God and said clean this guy. I'm going to pray the gospel over your life right now.

Lord Jesus, we love you so much. We thank you that you showed up in our miry pit as the Psalmist says. In the quicksand of life, we're sinking. We have no place to go. And there's Christians in this room that have parts of their life, they're sinking. They're secret. Their marriages have stunk for years and years, and it just hurts. They're miserable. They're alienated. They're isolated. Lord, would you give us the courage and the security through this scripture today that we read to know that the gospel applied to us is a good thing, that it does take care of gnarly things. That's the way that you designed this story is that you're pulling us, lifting us, standing us up saying, you're my child. Know your place. It's a wonderful place to be a part of the Trinitarian family.

But Lord, there are people in this audience that have never really giving you their everything, their grossest stuff. And that's all you're asking. Trust me, it's really pleasing. I'm really excited to help you. And so God let us receive the help that brings life, that regenerates hearts, that renews lives, that transforms our position with you. We get eternal love. We get to be with you forever. We just get a sampling of it now, and we're learning how to grow in all of this. And so Lord Jesus, I thank you that you died on the cross and what wipes and cleanses the reverse unicorns is your blood. It was costly and you did show us the sacrifice of love and the measure of it. And you are the ultimate of that. You are love. It's very true father, as you sent the son and you showed us love there. And the manifestation of love, love is a person. And yet we murder love in our hearts and our minds and our criticisms.

And so Lord, let us let love rule and reign over our hearts and Holy Spirit, move us. Give us the courage to be a people of repentance, yes, but that allow to be made, right. Not that we repent all the time and we're down, down, down Eeyores Lord, but that we could be lifted up and

shine brightly and live a bold existence for you here in the Puget sound area. We love you, God, thankful for you. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, Amen. Amen.