

May 28/29, 2022

## A Heart of Love

*Real Change: Getting to the Heart of It*

**1 John 4:7-21**

Pastor Matt Meyer

Well, good morning. I want to ask you to do something with me as we start out today. Real quick, in your mind, I want you to think about three things that you love. Just make a list in your mind—three things—it doesn't matter how high a priority they are, just three things that you love. You got a list in your mind? Okay, turn to somebody next to you, and just exchange your list. You've got 30 seconds to do this—three things that you love.

Okay, so what are some of the things that you love? Just shout them out: “Freedom,” “God”, good church answer. What else? “Family” “Huskers” Is that what I heard? Boy, diehard. (*laughter*) What else? Say that again for me, Ryan. “Hot Rods?” Alright, hot rods. Yeah. What else? “Nature,” so many different things that we love, right? So, we've got a pretty big challenge in front of us this morning. Because, for the next few minutes, we want to see if we can come to understand just a little bit more, maybe figure out a little bit what it means to cultivate a heart of love, versus a heart of indifference.

Now, here's why I think that's a challenge. Because the word love has got to be one of those words in the English language that is probably misused or overused, maybe more than any other word. We use the same word, like you all just did, for so many different things, and I know I kind of snuck you into that. But we say things like, “I love that car,” and, “I love you, sweetheart,” and, “I love pizza,” and, “I love to travel,” and, “I love my family.” We just throw that word around so much that pretty soon it can get to where it has a lot of different meanings. Or another way to say that is, it really doesn't have very much meaning at all.

Most of us know that God loves us, right? Maybe you've heard that since you were a child, that God loves us. We also know that, according to Jesus, the greatest commandment is, “*To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind,*” and then He said, “*The second is like Love your neighbor as yourself.*” We know that in our heads, but how do we cultivate a heart of love? How do we cultivate a heart that understands and lives in that kind of love that loves God with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind? How do we cultivate a heart that grasps and revels in God's love for us, and then a heart that offers that kind of love to others? See, that's the kind of heart Jesus wants to create in us. That's what we've been talking about this whole series. He wants to form us spiritually in such a way that we know it more than just in our heads. Knowing it in our heads is important but we also want it to affect our lives. Because, as Ryan said last week, that's where the heart comes in.

In the Scriptures, the heart is the center of our being; it's where all the action takes place. It's where you make choices and decisions, and all of our actions flow out of that. Everything flows out of the heart. So, to say it another way that I heard John Ortberg once paraphrase Dallas Willard, “Having my heart formed spiritually by Jesus is coming to believe with my whole body, what I say I believe with my mind.” I will say it for you again. “Having my heart formed spiritually means

coming to believe with my whole body,” meaning everything I do—all of my actions, all the way I live my life— “...coming to believe with my whole body what I say I believe with my mind.” Meaning I don't just understand it in my head, it shows up in my life. So, when it comes to the word love, and this idea that when we hear something like, “God loves us,” or, as we're going to read in just a few moments, “God is love,” we need to understand what that means. Because it's probably not that God feels about me the way I feel about pizza, and I think we intuitively know that. We know there's got to be a difference there. But maybe because love is so overused as a word in our language, maybe understanding and really getting the differences differ a little bit. Maybe we've lost sight of that. So, we're going to think together with God this morning as we look at His Word.

We're going to primarily be in 1 John, chapter 4, so if you have a Bible, you can turn there. I invite you to do that. If you don't have a Bible, I'd invite you to maybe look on with someone next to you. I'm sure they'd be glad to share with you. And, if you aren't sitting next to someone and you don't have a Bible, I think they're going to put the verses up on the screens for you as we go through them.

Let me give you just a little bit of background because we're jumping right into the middle of a letter. In this letter that John is writing to some churches, he's dealing with a very specific problem of false teachers who have put forth to these people, a counterfeit Christianity. These particular teachers live unloving lives. They live immoral lives. There's simply no evidence in their lives that the truth has done anything in changing them, and that's contrasted with the radical change that has happened in the lives of the people that he's writing to, and he's trying to draw that idea out.

Now, as we go through this passage, I want you to be asking some questions. What are the images or the ideas that should come into my head about love when I hear things like, “God is love,” or, “God loves me,” and, “How can I know if I'm starting to understand and experience God's love?” And I say *starting* because it's a process and we're all in process. I think it's a process that continues for the rest of our lives: that we grow and grow and grow in our understanding and our experience of God's love. But that process starts with catching a glimpse and allowing God to plant His love in our hearts, as we're going to look at today. So, let's see what John has to say. First John, chapter 4, start in verse 7:

**Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.** (\*NASB, 1 John 4:7-8)

So, there's two images here, two ideas right away that John uses that are very important. The first one is the idea of being **born of God**; second one is the idea that **God is love**. We're going to talk about the second one first. So just make a note of that first one of this idea of being born of God, because we're going to come back to it. But John says in verse 8, **God is love**, so what exactly does he mean? What's he talking about there? Well, he's talking about a divine characteristic. It's a part of who God is and what He's like, meaning love is not just something that God does, it's what He is at His deepest level. God has always been love. God is a trinity of relationships—the Father and the Son and the Spirit that have existed since eternity past. And in this relationship between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, they've always been loving and deferring and encouraging and serving one another in what theologians call *The Dance of God*. And it's this idea that the Father,

well He loves the Son, and He shows the Son everything He's doing. And the Son, He loves the Spirit, and the Spirit, He loves Jesus back. But the Spirit, He also loves the Father, and the Father loves the Spirit, and it just keeps going around like this little dance, this beautiful picture of love. This is how the Trinity has existed since eternity past. That's the way God's always been within Himself, within the being of God the Father and the Son and the Spirit—so united in their love for one another—that they're essentially one. Three in one, that's the beauty of the Trinity.

There's never ever been a time when God was not loving. There's never ever been a time when He was irritated with someone and acted not in love. It's hard for us to get our minds around, right? Because that's not the way we are. This is not the way I am. I can be very unloving at times. God is the summation of all love, so that all love comes from God, which is what verse 7 says: **Love is from God.** But that doesn't mean that God and love are equal. If God and love are equal, then we could say love is God. But to say that would be to exalt and worship a single attribute of God, but it would not be worshipping God Himself.

Now **love**, according to the Bible, is a commitment of the will. When the Bible says **God is love**, it means it's an essential attribute of His being, meaning it conditions all the other attributes of His being, meaning He can do nothing except that He does it in love. So, He has this commitment of His will to do things for us in love. Dallas Willard goes on and says that it's, “To will the good of another,” again, his definition of love is to “Will the good of another”. So, when God does something in love, He does it for our good.

Now, we tend to think, and theologians talk about this kind of love as not being primarily about emotion, which is definitely true when you compare it and contrast it to the way our culture views love, which is all about feelings. But agape love, which is the kind of love that's all over our passage and all over the Scriptures, it's the highest form of Christian love, and it's not completely without emotion. It's the kind of love and action that shows empathy. There are feelings involved there. Agape love extends the desire for the good of the beloved. It wants the best. Agape love extends help or demonstrates good intentions, and it's sacrificial; it's willing to sacrifice to accomplish the good that it desires for the beloved.

I think it's important for us to stop for a few minutes and ponder God's love this morning. We did it a little bit ago in some of the songs we sang, especially this last song that we sang. But do you realize this morning that God loves you simply because He loves you? Deuteronomy, chapter 7, verses 7-9, verses we read together, right? What does it say? He's talking about Israel, and it says:

**The Lord did not set his love on you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers.**

And it goes on and says He is **the faithful God, who keeps His loving kindness to the thousandth generation.** God didn't choose Israel because she was great. She was the fewest. God chose Israel, set His love on Israel, simply because He loved her. God sets His love on you this morning because He loves you, not because of anything you've done or can do or will do or won't do. He loves you because He loves you, because He created you. That's hard for us to get in a world like ours, where there's always this competition thing going on. We always feel like there's

a comparison, where I'm always being sized up. Maybe I'm sizing myself up. “Am I acceptable? Am I successful enough? Do I have the right clothes on? Do I look the right way? Am I skinny enough? Am I cool enough?” God says, “Step away from that. I love you because I love you.”

The Bible also tells us that God loves us before we love Him. While we were still sending the images, while you were shaking your fist in God's face, against Him, God sent Jesus to demonstrate His love, Romans 5:8 **But God demonstrates His love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

The Bible also says God rejoices over you this morning with great joy. The image of Zephaniah 3:17 is this idea that God is so excited and shouting when He sees someone returning to Him, it's like He, He's so excited He doesn't know what to do with Himself.

Another definition of God's love that incorporates this idea of delighting is that God's love is His delight in giving what's best to those made in His image. God's love is His delight in giving what's best, willing the good, giving what's best to those made in His image. It's like the picture of the father in the story of the prodigal son. He's so excited when he sees his son returning, he can't wait. He just runs, greets his son, and he gives him all the best—the best clothes, the best ring, the best meal—he just throws a huge party for him. That's what God's love for you is like.

Or here's another picture. God's love is **lavish**. It's so great, it's overflowing. It's too much; it goes way beyond. That's what John is trying to get at in the previous chapter of this letter; we also read that. **See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God. And such we are.** Now we don't use this term lavish very much anymore, right? It just means to pour on and pour on and pour on and pour on...it just keeps going. This is the way grandparents are, many grandparents are with their grandchildren. Certainly true of my mom; certainly true of Renee's mom. Whenever they're around our kids, they just want to give and give and give and give. Another way we use this term; we don't say it anymore. Have you ever been to a lavish feast? Again, you probably don't call it that. Think of Thanksgiving where there's more food than anyone can eat.

When I think of a lavish feast, I think of this place in Estes Park, this restaurant called Mama Rose's. My wife is laughing because the first time I ever went there, I was told, “Oh no, it's Italian so you have to say it that way *Mama Rose's*. So, first time I ever went there, I was on a backpacking trip with about 8 to 10 college guys. We'd been in the mountains for two days, sleeping in tents in the snow, so it's cold. We've got all of this heavy gear on to keep us warm, but we're hiking; we're sweaty; we're wearing the same clothes for two days. We're eating all dehydrated food, kind of talking about, “Oh, wow, this is rough,” and then someone's like, “Yeah, but when we get back, we're going to Mama Rose's,” and I was like, “Whoa, what's that?” “You'll see.” So we get into town and we didn't change, right? We immediately just came right off the trail, drove straight there. We're the only ones in the restaurant. We look grimy, sweaty, but these waiters come out and they serve family style and they do it in courses. So, they first come out with soup or salad, and you get to choose, and ultimately some of us got both, and we're kind of enjoying that. Then pretty soon, pretty quickly, they come out with this really light flaky bread that you put honey on. They bring the honey with them. It's so good, and as we're gorging ourselves on that, they come out with three huge heaping platters of spaghetti and meatballs, way more than we can eat for 8 or 10 of us, no

matter how hungry we were. And as we're maybe halfway done with that, they come out now with dessert. I mean, it's just, to me, it's so much! It's just lavish! It's just overflowing! That's what God's love for you is like; it can't be contained.

One last idea for you from the Scriptures. Psalm chapter 8, verse 4. The psalmist is meditating; he's thinking this; he says, **What is man that you take thought of him?** The Hebrew word for **take thought** in that verse means *fixture in the mind*. The psalmist is saying, “Why are humans a fixture in your mind?” Meaning the idea is that you and I were fixtures in God's mind. He never stops thinking about us. That's what God's love is like for you, for me. Really getting that thought, understanding it in a culture like ours, it can be challenging. You might think, “Why are we spending so much time on this?” Because the first step in cultivating a heart of love is to grasp and revel in God's love for me. In verse 7, when the text tells us in 1 John, that everyone who loves is born of God and knows God, the word *knows*, in the original language, means *experiential knowledge*, not head knowledge. It means you've experienced God; you've experienced His love. It also is in the present tense, which implies that love is connected to an ongoing awareness of who God is. To truly understand and experience the love of God, we must continue to be aware of His presence and action in our lives on a daily basis. The opposite is also true. Verse 8:

**The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

That word **know**, same word, means *experiential* but it's in aorist tense, which means John is talking about, he's describing a person who has never, ever experienced God at any time. Meaning therefore, because he's not experienced God, He does not love, because God is love. John's probably talking about it, in this case, about these false teachers where there's no evidence, they've experienced God. They're not different people. They're not more loving and he's contrasting that with what he sees in his readers' lives, growing in this understanding of God's love, so critical that it was a major prayer of the Apostle Paul's. You can find it in some form in almost every one of his letters. In Ephesians chapter 3, Paul prays that we will be able *to know, to understand, comprehend, with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge*. How can you know something that surpasses knowledge? Paul was talking about two different kinds of knowledge. He's saying, “I want you to know, through experience, this love of God that surpasses what you can know just in your head.” Another way of saying that, he wants us to come to understand it with our whole body, this love of God for us.

So, I'd encourage you to sit down this week and think about how you experience God's love on a daily basis. If you're not sure how to think about that, think about how you experience love from the people around you—from your friends, from your parents, from your kids, from your spouse, from your boyfriend, from your girlfriend—because it's critical. We begin to know through experience, the love that God is lavishing on us every day.

John Ortberg puts it this way, in his book *Love Beyond Reason*, which is a great book on this idea. He talks about the Sermon on the Mount and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is talking about the birds of the air not planting or reaping, but the heavenly Father feeds them and, Ortberg goes on to say this. “Jesus is saying anytime you see a bird nibble some seeds, you're not watching a

random event. You are watching love Himself at work.”<sup>1</sup> Watching a bird eat is such a random event that we rarely take notice of it but it's no accident that the food is available. Every time that you wake up, you go outside, you feel the breeze, you enjoy a meal, these are not random occurrences. They are Post-it notes of love from the Father, that He keeps attaching to all creation, in hopes that someone, that you and I, might read them. Perhaps you've experienced this in your own life in some ways. There was a time when you were lonely and God sent you a friend, not a random occurrence. There was a time when you needed some wisdom and guidance, and it came in the form of a book or a podcast or wise words from someone at just the right time. That's a Post-it note of the love of the Father towards you. Perhaps you were discouraged, and God gave you a time of worship that just flooded you with hope, or a specific song came on just when you needed it. Not a random occurrence: it's a Post-it note. James tells us that *every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows*.

I encourage you to stop and consider this week, what are the Post-it notes of love that the Father is sending to you every day? Because if we don't stop and consider this question on a regular basis, we'll be hindered from cultivating a heart of love. Now we've got to remember though, cultivating a heart of love is a process, that we're all in the process. By the way, that starts with birth. That's our other image. You remember from verses 7 and 8? Verse 7 says it's *everyone that loves is born of God*, so what kind of birth are we talking about? He goes on to explain that in verses 9 and 10:

**By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation, (or maybe your Bible says “expiation”) for our sins.**

This is one of the places in the Bible where the idea of being born again comes from an addition to John chapter 3, with Nicodemus. This one just talks about being born **of God**. It's the idea that when you trust Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, that's what propitiation and expiation is about. It means the *removal*. So, when you trust Jesus to forgive you through His death on the cross, you become born **of God**. You become born again. You have a new start, but not just a new start, not just a chance to do it over again on your own, but you have a new identity. The Scriptures tell us that when you're born again, you're a new creation, you have new spiritual DNA. Now, the word **manifest** in verse 9 means to *make known* or *make visible*. So, John is saying that when God sent Jesus into the world for the forgiveness of our sins, so He could die for us, that's how He manifested or made visible the love of God. Most of the time, when the New Testament wants to define love, it points back to Calvary. Romans 5:8, like we already looked at. John 3:16: **For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.** 1 John 3:16: **We know love by this, that Jesus laid down His life for us.** Most of the time, when the New Testament wants to define love, it points back to Calvary.

Look at the two words right after manifested in verse 9. What does it say? **By this the love of God was manifested...in us**, is what the New American Standard says. It doesn't say the love of God was manifested *to us*. It doesn't say the love of God was manifested *for us* to see, although both of those things are true. It says the love of God was manifested **in us**. I think that's talking about God

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<sup>1</sup> John Ortberg, *Love Beyond Reason* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).

planting His love in us through His Spirit. This attribute of love that He has, that He is, He plants it in us. It's part of being born again; part of the new spiritual DNA is the love of God in us.

Here's why I think that Bible scholar Gary Burge says this about this section of the passage. "Since God is love, we already looked at, those who encounter Him, those who are born again, those who have experienced His love, have the power to become loving persons. But don't lose this imagery of birth here. It's critical because if you lose it, if you forget it, the next stuff we read, the rest of the passage, can sound legalistic to you."<sup>2</sup> It's maybe going to sound like things we know we should do in our own strength, which is what we've said this series is not about that at all. But the rest of this passage just describes the process, the journey of growing up out of that new birth, the journey of love coming to maturity in us. Look at verses 11 through 14:

**Beloved, if God so loved us, (How did He love us? By sending Jesus to die on the cross.) we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.**

Now when verse 11 says **we ought to love one another**, try not to hear that as a *should*. I know it's hard because it's the word **ought**, but I think what he's saying is, "We ought to love one another because that's the natural consequence of having experienced God's love ourselves. It's the natural consequence of having love planted within us, that we grow up out of that and we become loving persons." In verse 12, it says that *when that love grows, it grows when we love one another*. Meaning, you're never going to grow in love by sitting in your room and thinking about it and reading and praying about it and meditating. Those are all good things, but if you want to grow in love, you have to go out and interact with people. You have to leave your room and at least interact with your family, which can sometimes be the hardest people to love. You have to go out into the world, and you have to interact with people and love people—some that can be very irritating, some that can be hard to love—and the Bible says that when you do that, God's love is perfected in you; it's brought to maturity. You learn to love the way God loves and when we love one another, remember, no one has seen God at any time. So, when we love one another, the God who is invisible, who has never been seen, the God who's hard for people to see, the God who seems like He's far away and not present, begins to be seen among us as close and personal, as we love one another.

And then I love verse 13 because I think John is wanting to give us security here, a little bit of assurance because when I go out and I interact with others, I don't always love. In fact, I can be very unloving at times, and so I might be tempted to think, "Well, maybe I don't know God, because I'm not loving," and John was saying, "No, the way you know, is by the Spirit that He's given you." Meaning the way that you know is that when you're not loving, you realize it; you recognize it, because the Spirit convicts you about it. Because that's one of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to say, "You know what? That wasn't very loving," and you don't feel very good about the way you interacted. In fact, inside you feel kind of crappy about it.

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<sup>2</sup> Gary Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).

So how about we come away from that, move back towards the way of Jesus and His love? There's forgiveness for you, which is what verse 14 is about, right? That's why God sent Jesus as a Savior because we need saving. Even though the seed of love has been planted in my heart, it's not perfected yet, and when I go out, I may and probably will, still sin along the way. And Jesus says, "You know what? That's what I died for." And keep in mind by the way, God's love is not dependent. God's love for you is not dependent on what we just looked at. God loves you because He loves you, because He created you, the way a father loves His children. I love each of my children the same. I take great delight in each of them. There's nothing that could make me love them more or love them less; I just love them. This doesn't mean I don't want them to grow and change. It just means my love is not dependent upon whether they grow and change or not.

Now in the next verses, John begins to describe what it looks like in our lives, when love is perfected in us, when the seed of love begins to mature, when we're beginning to get it, beginning to understand it. Verses 15 and 16:

**Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**

This starts to sound a little bit circular; it starts to sound a little bit like the dance of God. God abides in us; we abide in Him. He abides in us; we abide in love...because it is circular. But in essence, what he's saying is when we confess Jesus as Savior, we receive the love of God into our lives, and then God gives us the capacity to love Him back and the capacity to love others as He abides in us and we abide in Him and through that, the love of God is known or experienced in the world. Verses 17 through 21:

**By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one 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, that the one who loves God should also love his brother.**

So John says that if you want to know how to know that you're growing, if you want to know how to know when love is being brought to maturity in you, that you're starting to get it, the answer is you no longer fear. You no longer fear God. That's verses 17 and 18, when he's talking about judgment. He's talking about standing before God on that ultimate judgment day. You don't fear that because, ultimately, you know deep down in your heart, "God loves me; He loves me because He loves me, not because of anything I've done or could do or will do, He loves me because of Jesus."

Verses 19 through 21 are about not fearing others, but loving others. We're able to love because He first loved us. It's probably the third or fourth circular time that He said that in this passage. We're able to love because we have experienced God's love for us. We're free to love others,

because we no longer fear what they think of us, what they might do to us, what they might say to us, how they might treat us, because God's perfect love has cast out that fear.

So, how do I cultivate this love? How do I cooperate with God in seeing this love that He's put in me for others grow to completion, to perfection? Well, it starts with how we see people, how we think about them. See we live in a culture that encourages an “us” versus “them” mentality, not just us “and” them, but us “versus” them, and so if those people are not with us, then they're against us, and so we must be against them. Our culture says if someone hits you, hit back harder. If someone insults you, take it up a notch. Jesus' response to that would be, “Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.” It starts with how we see people. We have to stop thinking of everyone as an enemy and, when there are people that oppose us—and there will be because we're not all going to agree on everything—we have to pray for those people.

Now at this point, we could preach a whole other message on what it means to love our enemies, to bless those who persecute you, and I don't have time for that. But there's a great resource that I put up on the *Real Change website*, that's all about this. It's a chapter about how to bless those who curse you. It's a phenomenal chapter, but there is one thing we can begin doing today. We also live in a culture that judges by outward appearances, right? And in fact, that's just the human condition. The Bible tells us man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. When we see people as we go through our day, we tend to evaluate them, judge them, think about them based on external appearances—on how they look, on what they say, on how they act. If they're dressed sloppily, we tend to think less of them. Now, maybe I'll just think and talk for myself here for a minute. I won't assume it upon you, but I wrestle with this. If someone does not appear worthwhile to me, then I'm kind of indifferent to them. If I don't think they have something to offer me, I can tend to just discard them. In the best-case scenario, I don't give them much thought, but in the worst case, I see them, when I see something that looks like trash, I treat it like trash. I don't necessarily say that; I'm not saying that in my mind, but if I'm discarding the person, that's in a sense how I'm viewing them.

Tim Noble and Sue Webster are artists who make art out of scraps and trash and stuff they find lying around. Their exhibits are interesting; it's thought provoking. What's most interesting about their art is that when you shine a light on it, it takes on a whole new perspective. What if we began to see people, to choose to see people, in the light of the gospel of Jesus? *That God so loved the world that He gave*, that Jesus willingly died for every person that we see as we go about our days no matter what they look like? No matter how trashy they might seem? What if we resolve with the Apostle Paul in Second Corinthians 5, that from now on we're going to recognize no one *according to the flesh*, meaning according to externals, according to how they look, what they say, how they treat us, because every person that we see is made in the *Imago Dei*, the image of God. In some people, that image might be more marred than others, but they're still made in the image of God. Every person we lock eyes with, is loved by God.

You know, one of the places I struggle with this the most is competition—sports competition. It's not mine, because I don't compete competitively; I don't do sports anymore. It's my kid's competition. You can ask my wife or my mom, who're sitting right down there. There are multiple times at soccer games or things are getting intense, and this arm just gets laid on my arm...this hand gets laid on my arm. (*laughter*) Because I don't see the kids on the other team or the parents

that are just a few yards away, by the way. I don't see them as people God loves. I see them according to the flesh. I see them as an enemy, especially if there's dirty play going on and the other parents are yelling about how unfair things are, when I'm watching their kids be dirty players. There are all kinds of gross things rising up in my heart in those moments. I'm not surrendered; I'm not content; I'm not at peace or rest. There's chaos everywhere in my heart, and I certainly don't want to love those kids or parents. Those same things rise up in my heart at other times in my life as well. It's how I know that I need Jesus to change my heart.

We need to ask Jesus to help us see people the way He sees people. That's what this card is about that you got as you walked in. It's a prayer that I would encourage you to pray every morning, maybe pray it on the way to work, maybe pray it when you're spending time with Jesus, maybe put it somewhere where you see it throughout the day, and you just pray it periodically. But it's not just about praying the prayer. That's important, but it's also about, as you go about your day, remembering that every person that you see is made in the image of God. Every person that you lock eyes with is loved by God. Pray this for a month. Do that. See if it changes the way you see people, and then basically the way you interact with them because of that. I've been praying this prayer for several years, not every day, but I've been praying it for a number of years as a part of some of the things that I do in the morning. I'm going to pray it to close us today. I'd invite you to pray along with me. This morning, I'm going to change the words just a little bit because it's not early in the morning; it's not *silence this newborn day*. Let's pray:

*Lord, in the silence of these moments, right now, we come to request Your peace, Your wisdom and Your strength. Today we want to see the world with eyes full of love, to be patient, understanding, humble, gentle and good, to see Your children behind outer appearances, as You see them also, so that we can appreciate the goodness in each one. So, close our hearing to all murmuring; guard our tongues from all evil, that only Your thoughts that bless others remain in us. We want to be so well intentioned and good, that all who draw near to us feel Your presence, Jesus. Transform us with Your goodness and kindness and make that, in this day, we reflect You. Amen.*

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