



WALK IN LOVE

Step by Step | 6.15.25

Libin Abraham

(The following text is automatically generated and has not been edited)

Libin Abraham 0:00

How many Beatles fans do we have in the house? All right, I got a few. Okay, okay, 1967 I was not born then, I don't think. But in 1967 there was a song from The Beatles, and the refrain within the song became an iconic statement of the modern era. And it went like this. All you started singing already, cat, all you need is love. Love is all you need. All You Need Is Love, and Love is all you need. Now, it's catchy, idealistic, and I would want that to be true, but here's a question, I think, what kind of love are we talking about? What kind of love is it that we all need? And all we need is that kind of love. Because I know this week, my mom made some amazing fish fry from some bass I caught just a few weeks ago. And after having this fish fry, I said, with a happy, full stomach, man, I love that meal. And with the same math used in the same words, I looked at my wife and said, Honey, I love you, not because of the fish. I just really do love her every day I told her I love her as well, same word to describe two very different kinds of emotions and love. Because, you know, the kind of love I have for food is not the same as I have for my wife, same for you. So what kind of love are we talking about? What is love? The question of what is love? Is philosophers and theologians, theologians try to wrestle that what is true love? This is a question that poets and adolescents are conflicted about. What is love? It's a question that children abandoned by families and spouses betrayed by the other wrestle with tears in their eyes and heartbreak in their soul. What is love? Yet we know at the core of who we are as people, we long to love and we long to be loved, there is this essential human need for love, and oftentimes, when we don't know what looks like or where it comes from, we find ourself looking for love in all the wrong places. What is love? But I'm convinced today that perhaps the better question, before we ask ourself, what is love is rather who is love without understanding the who you may never understand, the what if you don't understand who is love, love will remain forever subjective and perhaps even unknowable. So today we want to jump into First John, where John introduces to us who is love. We've been in this series now for the last three weeks, and we've talked from chapter one when John says, Look, if you are children of God, you live in the light. Children of God don't live in the dark. They live in the light. And last week, John would teach us that those who live in the light, they treasure God's commands. They keep the commands of God, because their heart has been transformed by him, and there's a treasuring of the commands of God. And today, John's gonna teach us, as he does over the next from Chapter two all the way to the end of First John that the most specific command that John has in mind is the command that the church loves one another, the commandment from Jesus himself from the upper room, that we would love one another. I told you over the last few weeks that John is addressing a church divided. They're in a crisis of division. So John's resolution for a church divided is not to debate over the finer points of theology, but rather join. John points them to two things. He points them, first of all, to clarity around who Jesus is, and second of all, he calls them to the command to love one another. Who is Jesus, and how do we love one another? We're gonna be in First John, chapter four, where he gives us the most complete treatment on the topic of love. And here in First John, we're gonna see three aspects of love that John will disclose to us. He will teach us about the source of love, the nature of love and the call to love. What is love source? What's its nature and what is its invitation and call to each and every one of us today, let's look first at the source of love in First John, chapter four, John addresses where love comes from. Look down at verse seven, with me, dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God. Why? Because God is love. I saw couples in premarital counseling, one of the greatest mistakes that couples can make in marriage is to look to each other to be the source of love. And when that happens, we quickly realize we are deficient sources of love. And John is saying here, love does not actually come from within just us. Love. Has to come from God, because God is love. There are so many truths that the Scripture teaches us about who God is. So scripture writers will say God is light, God is truth, God is Spirit. God is a consuming fire. He is holy, God is just, he is righteous, and all of those things are true. God is eternal. All of those things are

true, and we need to know God and experience God as being all of those things at the same time. Otherwise, when pain comes and suffering comes, we don't have a theology strong enough to handle life. God is all of those things, yet at the same time, all that God is is in perfect harmony with God being love. He can be all those things and be love at the same time, I want you to think of the most loving person in your life. It may be the person you're sitting next to, it may be a child, it may be a spouse or a parent, as loving as that person might be, you would find it difficult to say my mom is love, or my dad, my spouse is love. They're loving. But we know that people are capable of doing some things that are not always originating in love, don't we? That we have this capacity in us sometimes to do that which is not loving. So as loving as that person might be, I don't think we would say that person is love. Yet, when it comes to God, we can truly, with confidence, say God is love, not just loving. That He is love because it is who he is, and everything he does originates out of love, and no other attribute of God can ever contradict love, because God is love. It's the source. He is, the source of love. John says, God is love, but a prevalent truth, a counterfeit truth, that we might find in society today is the changing of those words to say love is God. But I'll tell you, God is Love does not equal love is God. You may say, well, it's just a reordering of a couple of words. What's the big deal? But actually, that changes everything. When we say God is love, what we say is God actually defines the fullness of love. But if we say love is God, what we're saying is human. Love now determines who God is. We can say grass is green, but you wouldn't say green is grass, would you? So John is saying God is love. He defines love. He determines what loving is not. The other way around. God is love. Now John is speaking to those who claim to know God, and John makes it clear, if you claim to know God, but you are not loving, you might not actually know him like you think you do. Why? Because God is love, and those born of God must carry the nature of being loving. That if you claim to know God, who, by the way, is love, but you live a life that lacks love, those two things are incompatible. A life in God is incompatible with a life that is not loving. God is love. So we, who are His children also embody his nature of love, because He is a source of love. So the who is God? God is a source of love. Now John specifically says, Okay, if God is love, he's a source of love, then what does love look like? Now we can get to the what, what is the very nature of this love. So John starts off with a generic sense of love. Now he defines it in the most specific way, so that we would know what love is for. Look with me at the nature of love. Verse seven of First John four dear friends, let us love one another because let it be because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. I'm sorry. Verse nine, I'm sorry. The angel of love. Verse nine, God's love was revealed from a long morning. Y'all so pray for me. God's love was revealed among us in this way.

Libin Abraham 9:16

This is how God reveals His love, how God sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. Love consists in this, not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is love. John says, not that we love God, but he loved us. It specifically defines love by the cross, where God sent His Son to die so that we might live. And John says that's the definition of love. So often, the thing in our circumstances, when things are going bad, there's pain, there's suffering, there's divorce, there's a job loss, there's cancer. We've had to bury a child in those moments when our life is really difficult, we find it hard to experience God actually being loving, and we wonder, God, where is your love in this moment? But I want to propose to you right here the way God defines love. That definition of love came from the most painful moment in the Godhead, where the only begotten Son of God was sent into the world. And that son went to a Roman cross, and He died, Jesus on the cross dies for you and I. He dies the most gruesome death so that we could have eternal life. And the father looks at us and says, That's my love for you. This is love. This is what love looks like. So God's love is not defined by our circumstances, though. God's love doesn't change in the midst of our circumstances. Rather, God's love is defined by the cross. See if you're looking around you to try and define God's love, look back to the cross. That's the full and complete definition of how God loves us. He loves us, as evidenced by the cross of Jesus. John says this is how love has been revealed, not that we love God, because when we were not loving God, he still loved us. When we were not looking for him, he was looking for us. He was pursuing us. Paul says, in Romans five, verse eight, like this, but God proves his love for us. If you needed proof of God's love, Paul says, This is how he proves his love while we were still sinners, not righteous, not holy, while we were still in our sin. Christ died for us. Oh, the definition of love comes from the painful, gruesome death of the Son of God. John says God sent His only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Atonement, like I said a few weeks ago, means at one met. Here's how God took people who were so far from God, distant from God. There's no way we can make it back to God because of our sins and the wrath and judgment we incurred on our behalf because of our sin. And here, God being just and God being love is in perfect harmony, because though we deserve death, though we deserve the cross, God pays the price of our sin. He takes on the full wrath we owed, the full judgment that was to come on us came on Jesus, and Jesus, for six hours on the cross, took the full weight of human sin past, present and future. And John says his love made his son become the atoning sacrifice for our sins. There are some in Christian circles will say Jesus died simply as a victim of the injustice of his day in the hands of the Romans, or that Jesus died as a martyr because of his

position on the social issues of the day. And yes, Jesus was treated unjustly. He did die in the hands of the Roman authorities. But make no mistake, the ultimate reason for why Jesus came and for why he died is because he came to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. It was always the plan that, through His death, our sins will be paid for, because this was the only way for us to be made right with God. So Jesus takes what we were owed becomes a perfect sacrifice, the sinless lamb of God, without spot or blemish, hanging on that Roman cross so that God's favor, his acceptance, could be placed on us. It's a beautiful transfer. Our sin on him, his life, his righteousness on us. Johnston wrote it like this, for the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be, but God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Isn't that the good news of the gospel? This is what Jesus does. He takes the place we deserve and gives us the place that only he deserved because of his righteousness. So this is what love is. How do we know this love? How does this love get applied to the depths of our soul, into the depths of our heart? John tells us that in first, John 4:13, John says it like this, this is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us. In other words, John is saying, This is how you live in this love. Here's how you abide in this incredible self, giving sacrificial love. He has given us of His Spirit. Not only did God give us Jesus on the cross, but he's given us His Spirit so that we might dwell and abide in God and His love may abide in us. So the Holy Spirit comes and says, look to the cross to define what love is. And the Holy Spirit in the moment of our weakness and pain and our grief and our suffering, he reminds us of the love of God by pointing us to the cross. And it's the Holy Spirit that says, Look, if God loved you enough to send his son and die for you on that cross, doesn't he still love you right now in the midst of your pain, it's the Holy Spirit that says you are not defined by your sin, but you are defined by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. It's the Holy Spirit that speaks to our pain when we feel so depleted of love, and it's the spirit that reminds us of the faithful presence of our father with us. The Spirit says, Your pain is real, but your pain is temporary. Because out of love, Jesus is preparing a place for you without tears, without cancer, without grief, without any sorrow at all, because that's what love does. Notice the words of Paul in Romans? Five, Verse five, this hope will not disappoint us. Why? Because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through who, the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. I know in a room like this and online, there are some of you whose hearts need a replenishing of the love of the Father. You're dealing with pain, you're dealing with questions, and you're asking that, where is God? Where is your love? Today, I just want to pause and ask the Holy Spirit of God to pour out a fresh into your heart the love of the Father, the love of the Father that comforts, the love of the Father that may not answer every question for you, but it overwhelms you with peace, the love of the Father that rushes in like a mighty river to the deepest parts of our pain. And he points you to the cross, and He says to you, you actually identify with the love of God the most in your pain, because God defines his love by the cross, a place of pain, a place of rejection, a place of sorrow. This is the precise, specific nature of the Father's love that he fills our heart with through the person of the Holy Spirit of God. The source of love is God. The nature of love is the cross, and as the Spirit brings that into our heart, now we are given the call to love, the command, invitation to love. Look at Verse 11 of First John, four dear friends, if God loved us in this way, John is so specific in this way, which way is it? It's the way of the cross. It's the way of humility. It's a way of sacrifice. It's a costly way, isn't it? It's the way where Jesus would pray for his enemies, forgive his executioners. It's a painful way. If God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. If this is God's definition of love, well, this is God's invitation to love that we love one another as Christ loved us on the cross. This is a command for the church and for believers in Jesus. It doesn't exclude how Christians love the world, but it's specific to the kind of love that we share among us, because God's desire is that when the world sees his love in us, they will meet him and they will encounter him. There are so many negative things the church is known for by the world. Some may be justifiable. Others may not be. But it doesn't matter, because at the end of the day, Jesus said in John 13, what the church was always to be known for Jesus, as he gathered with his disciples in the upper room, gave a new command, and John records his new command for us in John 13, verse 34 where Jesus says, I give you a new command. And by the way, all across First John, this is the command that John is referring back to and building his whole case for love. John says, Jesus says, I give you a new command. And what is that command? Love one another.

Libin Abraham 19:18

Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. And by this, everyone the world will know lost people will know your city will know by this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. The greatest distinctive of the church, the greatest marker on the church. It's the love of Jesus that we love one another with the love of Christ with which He loved us and gave himself for us on the cross later on in John 17, Jesus in this high priestly prayer, prays this to the Father, Jesus prays in verse 26 of John 17, to the Father, saying, I made Your name known to them, meaning the disciples, Father, I've revealed you to them and will continue to make it known. Why? So that the love you have loved me with may be in them, and I may be in them. I just find this prayer so fascinating. In just the last few hours before Jesus is betrayed, a few

days before the cross, as Jesus is praying to the Father, He says, Father, I revealed you to them. I've shown them your name, I've shown them what you are like. I've revealed the father to them so that they would actually experience the exact same love that you and I have had for all eternity long, the purpose for Jesus coming and showing us the Father. So there's a perfect love within the Trinity, love without pride, a love without flaw, a love that's unconditional and love that points to the other, glorifies the other, exhausts the other, a love that is self giving. Jesus says, I want the church to experience this kind of love, and the only way they can experience it is if I show it and I be it on the cross. Jesus' prayer is that in our inner being, we possess the very same love that is between the Father and the Son. This is the heart of Jesus for His church that we would love one another. So father and son have always in perfect love, loved one another. John goes on in first, John 4:12 and says, no one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is made complete in us. John says, No one's ever seen God. The word seen is a Greek word from where we get the word theater, theomai Theater. It means a close observance, or even an encounter up close. It's a visual representation of a theater where you see up close in a magnified form. And John says, No one's ever seen God like people in the Old Testament had glimpses of God through theophanies or Revelation. It always took them out. They couldn't handle it. Jesus, who is the Son of God, the perfect embodiment of the Son of God. Of God. He was veiled in human flesh. We didn't fully get to see His glory face to face. He was veiled in human flesh. He carried glory. He was God, but he was veiled in human flesh. So John says, No one's seen God face to face, in all of his majesty, in the fullness of His glory and essence, because you can't see God and live. But then there's a turn. John says, No one's actually seen God, but if we love one another, God remains among us. In other words, here's what John's saying. No one's seen the fullness of God's glory, but if we love one another, as Christ loved us, this is how God reveals His glory to the world. This is how the invisible God becomes visible to the world through our love. In fact, what he's saying is the love of the church is God's feeder through which he reveals His glory to the world. That's the proof that God exists. The proof is not in my sermon. The proof isn't even in our music. The proof that God dwells among us is in the way we love one another. So if we want the world to see God, we don't just preach louder. We love better. We love one another. Christ loved us, and John says this is how the world sees God. Bob Goff, in his book, loved us. He said it like this, the love is more of a sign language than it is a spoken language. When you speak about love, we show it. We show it so people will see it and they glorify the Father. John describes what this could look like. John goes on to tell us in first John three, verse 16, this is how we have come to know love. He laid down His life for us again, pointing us to the cross to define love. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. I gotta tell you, even as a pastor, I don't really like that verse that sounds painful, that sounds like it inconveniences me, it sounds like I would put others before my own needs. I. Yes, but that sounds like the cross, doesn't it? So the Father's love is seen by him laying down our life. John says we should also lay down our life, our lives, for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him. How does God's love reside in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech. That's the easy part, but let's love in action and in truth. That's the more difficult part. That's the costly part. Yet that is the only way of Christ's love. It gets even harder. I'm sorry y'all look down at verse 19, we love because he loved us first. If anyone says, I love God and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister, whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And we have this command from him, the one who loves God, must also love his brother and sister. It's easy to love your brother and sister when they agree with you, when everything is right and in perfect harmony, but how do you love a brother or sister who has wounded you, has betrayed you, lied about you? So much easier to just turn our face and walk the other way. But John says this is the call to love even when it costs us something, even when there's pain and betrayal, we continue to love one another. It's easy to love people who look like you and vote like you and think like you and see the world like you, but Christ's love specializes in loving the other, whoever the other might be, loving the stranger, loving the person who comes from the different walk of life than you. On the cross, Jesus forgave and loved those who were being hostile to him. Still he loved them. He loved his executioner. He loved those who vehemently disagreed with him and nailed Him to a cross. Because Christ's love doesn't just love the person just like me, it loves the other person, whoever that might be, and however different they might be from me. This is the love of Christ. How are we doing in this kind of love? This is a supernatural love, isn't it? This is beyond human love. This is a divine love that the spirit births in our heart and loves through us. So if you find yourself deplete of this kind of love you need to ask the spirit, spirit, if this is your command for us to follow. Help me love like this. Teach me to love like this. Help me see people like this. John says in verse 12, this is how love is made complete among us. First. John four, this is the way love is made complete if we love one another. The word in the Greek for completeness is telos. It means, literally, to reach its intended goal. This is how the love of the Father reaches its goal, its intended goal, by us loving others like this. So here's a triangle. Here's an image I think may help. Here's what John is saying. It's about love. Love comes from God. It comes from Him. It can only come from Him, because He is love. And the love of God flows into ourselves through the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit takes this love of God that we see on the cross. He takes the sacrifice Jesus paid for us on the cross, and He makes our heart come

alive. He brings the love of the Father to the depths of our soul. So love, first and foremost, flows from God to ourself. But it doesn't stop there. Love reaches its goal by flowing from us to others. So if we've been loved like this by God, now we love others in the same way it has to keep flowing. We're not just containers of love, we're conduits of love. So just like electricity flows through its wires, man, God's love is flowing through us to others.

Libin Abraham 29:17

And John says, when God's love flows from us to others. It points back to God, because that's when they see him. That's how they see him. They see the God of love, who gave everything for the world. And Jesus said it like this, that if you love one another like this, the world knows the father. They meet him. This is the flow of love. Don't short circuit it. The love we receive from God must flow through others, so that others would see Him and glorify Him and be marveled at the incredible, sacrificial love of God. I. God. So those who've been born of God share his nature. Those who received his love by the Spirit give his love to the world around us. I got to tell you, this week has been a hard week for me, seeing everything happening in our own country, certainly the world, but even in our country, protests, rioting, clashes between civilians, officers, National Guard, all of that. Now I know how complex and nuanced this whole topic is, of immigration and how to do it well, and I gotta tell you, I am 100% for legal processes and due systems. As an immigrant myself, that is the only fair and right and equitable way for any nation, and especially for our nation, it is right and it is good while there are policies and politics that are play at the governmental level, and we can talk about that and debate it and talk through all the all the nuances, While at the government level, there are policies at play. At an individual level, as Christians, our first responsibility always is to love, as Christ followers who've experienced God's love, our first commitment, always and forever is to love. So hear me, there may be differences of opinion when it comes to policy, but we have to have one mind when it comes to people. We can argue, we can debate policy, but when it comes to people church, let's be of the same mind. Let's see people not through their paperwork. First and foremost. Let's see them as God sees them, individuals made in His image, loved by Him, and precious to Him. God has brought the world here for some reason, legally, illegally, but the world is here in some way. What will they learn about God through the love of the church, and especially for those who don't yet know him, God's plan for the church is to reveal Christ and His love through the way we love and care. I'm not saying that other things don't matter to God have right systems and processes in place, but for the church, as Christians, on an individual level, our commitment is first and foremost to love people and to see them as God sees them. So eventually, let's not be a church that is first and foremost known for the policies we endorse or the politicians we support. Let's be a church, as Jesus says, that are known for the way we love one another. Let's start there and anchor who we are there as individuals, and especially those in the family of faith, brothers and sisters in the kingdom, wherever they might live and wherever they have come from, we are obligated to love first as you go on by your week, in the cultural moments of today, or in the events of your family, as you go back to your family and your marriage is in strife and intention and the parent child relationship is struggling, and your coworker relationship is struggling. Ask yourself, What does Christ's love require of me? What does his love require of me? This is what John is saying, if we've experienced this love and the Spirit's brought it to light, how do we love? Well, when it makes no sense, what does this love require of us? Now, I think it's important to identify as we have determined what love is, to also say what love is not. What does love not mean? Unconditional? Love doesn't always mean unconditional agreement, and it doesn't always mean unconditional acceptance or affirmation of a person's choices or decision. It's actually a form of manipulation. To say, If you love me, you have to agree with me, and if you don't agree with me, then you don't love me. To disagree is not to discriminate. To disagree is not to hate. You can love someone and at the same time have points of disagreement. So hear me, you can love without agreeing, and you can accept without affirming, and sometimes to accept and to agree with a person's choices or decisions that are sinful or destructive that might actually be the opposite of loving. Since the love doesn't always mean to agree, but it doesn't mean that you can accept a person as valuable, you can show kindness and respect. It does mean that you can still see them as precious to God and loved by Him, especially when we disagree. Love Goes out of the way. You to communicate love. How counter cultural would it be to the norm of today that when the church shows up that it serves and loves people that we most disagree with? I know the robot said that's just impossible for you to love somebody you don't agree with friends, it's possible this has always been the way of the church, that even for a people who are hostile to the church, or whatever climate we may be in, that we are committed to forgiveness and the way of love and the way of service and kindness, that we are especially loving when there is disagreement. So show up with people at your work who may disagree with you and show up with a heart to serve and just see how crazy it drives them. You will love it. Love doesn't always agree, but especially when there's disagreement. Now we follow the way of loving others. Tradition says, From the early second century onwards, Church Fathers begin to write this story about John, who wrote First John and the Gospel of John. Tradition says that when John returned from Patmos, where he was in exile, he came back to Ephesus, and now John is an old, frail man. He can hardly walk, so they would carry

him into the church on a chair. In a chair, they would bring him to the front of the church, and they would say, John, would you speak to us? Would you teach us? And John as this old man, he would rise up slowly from his chair, and he would get up, and he would simply say, Little children, let us love one another. Little children, let us love one another. They would thank John and clap for him, and then they would be dismissed. And next Sunday shows up, and they would gather as a church that they would carry elderly John into the church, place them before the congregation. They said, John, thank you for speaking to us last week. Would you do it again? Give us a message. And John would rise slowly, and he would say, Little children, let us love one another. Children, let's love one another. This would go on for weeks and weeks, and eventually the church people said, John, we get it. You wrote us about that. We get it. That's the command of Jesus. But teach us more. Don't you have more to say, like you've seen revelation, you've seen into the future, you've seen the miracle of Jesus, of Jesus, you've walked with him. Give us more, John. But all John was saying is this, little children love one another. In fact, his response is recorded like this. Little children love one another, because this is the Lord's command. And if this alone be done, it is enough. If this alone is done, it is enough. John the Revelator, John who walked in the flesh with Jesus, seeing miracles, persecuted, suffered in exile, seeing the future. John boils the entire ethic of the kingdom of God to this one line sermon. Little children love one another. Why? Because if we can get that right, that just might be enough. Would you buy your heads with me in the world we live in today, with all of its chaos and hostility and division, perhaps for us in this moment, in this century, this too is enough, so Father, this is hard to do. This isn't just human love. It's not fluff. It's not emotions. It's anchored in a deeper place of the Spirit of God living in us and showing us the way of the cross. But because you are love, we can be loving because you are one with us. You live in our hearts. We're inseparable from you. So Jesus love through us. And right now, I just pray for the men and women in this room. In this room who feel depleted. Maybe there's a dad who's filled with regret and pain.

Libin Abraham 39:10

Holy Spirit, would you fill his heart with love, the Father's love? Maybe there's a mom, there's a child who misses their dad, wishes for one. Holy Spirit, fill that heart with the Father's love as we're dismissed in just a few minutes, or in a minute, would you send us into the world, completing the flow of love that started from the father come into our hearts so that it can go out to the world, wherever we find ourselves in, let us never be a person who is lacking the call to love, but empowered to do so, starting from our own family, our neighborhoods and our cities. And may this be enough, because love has a way. Love points to the cross. Love is not just subjective, it is objective. It points to Jesus, the one out of love gave his life so that we might live through him, help us. Holy Spirit. All this in the name of Jesus, we pray, and the church said together, amen, amen, amen, aren't you thankful for the words of God preserved for us in first John? Amen?