

## Tangible Love

*Listening to the Apostle of Love*

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Rick White was born to his parents, Dick and Judy, in 1962. As a result of oxygen deprivation to Rick's brain at the time of his birth, he was diagnosed as a spastic quadriplegic with cerebral palsy. Dick and Judy were advised to institutionalize Rick. They were told there was no hope of him recovering and there was little hope for Rick to live what the doctors were calling a normal life. That smile looks pretty normal to me. That was just the beginning of Dick and Judy's quest for Rick's inclusion in the community: in sports, in education, and one day even the workplace. Dick and Judy soon realized that though Rick could not walk or speak, he was quite astute. His eyes would follow them around the room. He was obviously very much aware of what was going on and after providing concrete evidence of Rick's intellect and ability to learn, they tried to find a way to help him learn how to communicate. This was back in 1972 and the \$5,000 that a group of engineers from Tufts University, an interactive computer was built for Rick. It had a cursor that was used to highlight every letter of the alphabet and once the letter Rick wanted was highlighted, he could select it by just tapping with his forehead a headpiece attached to the wheelchair. When the computer was originally brought home, Rick surprised everybody with his first message. They assumed it might be, "Hi, Mom," or maybe, "Hi, Dad." No, his first spoken words were, "Go Bruins," because Boston was in the Stanley Cup finals that season and it was clear from that moment on that he followed sports and enjoyed them just like everybody else.

In 1975 at the age of 13, Rick was finally admitted into public school and after high school, he attended Boston University and graduated with a degree in special education in 1993. His father, Dick, retired in 1995 as a Lt. Col. from the Air National Guard. He served our country for 37 years. In the spring of 1977, Rick told his father that he wanted to participate in a 5 mile benefit for a lacrosse player who had been paralyzed in an accident. Dick wasn't a long distance runner but he agreed to push Rick in his wheelchair and they finished all 5 miles coming in next to last. That night, Rick told his father, "Dad, when I'm running, it feels like my disability has disappeared." It feels like my disability has disappeared. Listen to some of the rest of their story.

Rick: What do I run for? This answer has two parts: first, our first race was to show someone who had an acquired disability that life goes on and

he could lead a productive life; the second reason for running is to be an inspiration to others. You see, it gives me a great feeling inside to see other families run with their family member with a disability or for people without disabilities to push people who are disabled in races.

Dick: Rick was attending a basketball game and they made an announcement that one of the lacrosse players in the college was in an accident and was paralyzed from the waist down so they were going to have a charity road race to try and help him raise some money so he could pay his medical bills. When Rick came home from that basketball game, he said, "Dad, I have to do something for him. I want to let him know that life goes on even though he's paralyzed. I want to run in the race." Well, at the time, I was 40 years old and I was not a runner but we went down to the race and we finished the whole 5 miles, coming in next to last but not last. When we got home that night, Rick wrote on his computer, "Dad, when I'm running it feels like my disability disappears," which was a very powerful message to me. If you think about it, somebody who can't talk or use his arms or his legs and now they're out there running, the disability disappears.

Rick: We have finished 1,091 race events in 34 years including 252 triathlons, six of which are Ironman distances, 70 marathons including 30 Boston marathons, 94 half-marathons and 155 5K races.

Dick: When we first started running, I used to run for Rick but now I'm out there running because we run together as a team. You know, I'm 73 years old and Rick is 51 years old. He still can't talk and use his arms and his legs but he has graduated from Boston University. He lives all by himself in his own apartment and Rick and I have competed in over 1,000 athletic events in the past 34 years. This coming year is going to be our 31st Boston Marathon and there is going to be a life-sized bronze statue of us at the starting line. From the doctor saying that he's going to be nothing but a vegetable, now he's going to be a bronze statue. It doesn't come any better than that.

Rick: We are team Hoyt and we run for the people who think they can't run.

From the doctor saying that he was going to be nothing but a vegetable to being a bronze statue at the starting line of the Boston Marathon. There are a lot of lessons there for sure but here is the question I want to ask you now: do you think that Dick Hoyt ever has to tell his son, Rick, that he loves him? I'm sure he does and I'm sure that we would say that he should but I'm asking you, would he have to? And in a very real sense, the answer to that is no. Why? Because he has shown it so consistently. He has learned how to practice tangible love.

With that in mind, please open your Bible now to 1 John 3. That's on page 186 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning. This fall were doing a series entitled "Learning from the Apostle of Love" and this a verse-by-verse exposition of the epistle of 1 John and so far we've talked about: proven love, authentic love, cautious love, brotherly love from chapter 2. Last week Pastor Green spoke to you about purifying love from the first half of chapter 3 and our assignment now is to study the last half of that great chapter.

As I read it, if you've been paying any attention to the news of what's gone on in this terrible murder trial of Cody Cousins and the murder of Andrew Bolt and have listened to some of what has been said, it just takes your breath away when we read this text. Remember, this was planned back in December of last year. It's just amazing how frequently the word of God is so breathtakingly relevant. I'm at 1 John 3, beginning at verse 11, John says,

11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, [that's a crucial phrase, by the way] We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him 20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. 23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. 24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this [notice how this ends] that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

We're talking this morning about tangible love. Tangible love. Let's just organize the clear argument of this text and look for three characteristics of love that is easily recognizable by others in our life. The first one is this: tangible love avoids the sins of Cain. Let me invite you now to open your Bible back at Genesis 4, at the front of the Bible. You might want to keep your hand in 1 John 3, we will eventually be back here but Genesis chapter 4. That's on page 3 of the very front section of the Bible. But this passage

really, what we just read in 1 John, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense unless you have some degree of familiarity with the story of Cain. John says in verses 11 and 12, "we should love one another not as Cain." Well, that suggests there is a treasure trove of information about how to accomplish our annual theme of "Loving Our Neighbors" embedded in this tragic story of what occurred with Adam and Eve's sons. I want to ask you as I read to be looking for characteristics of Cain that have to be avoided if we're going to practice tangible love and please don't think about how bad Cain was or think about how bad somebody like Cody Cousins is. Look for evidence of this in your own heart and life that if present even in seminal form, could prevent you from loving your neighbor's the way God wants you to.

Genesis 4, beginning in verse 1,

1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD." 2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." 8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"

You understand, by the way, that God never asks questions to get information.

And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Can you imagine saying that God?

10 He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. 11 "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." 13 Cain said to the LORD, [incredible instruction right here] "My punishment is too great to bear!

Of all the things he could've said, of all the positions he could have taken, he's going to be the victim in the story in his mind. "My punishment is too great for me to bear!" Now, why of all the Old Testament characters that John the apostle of love could have referenced, what does he want us to think about regarding the sins of Cain? Well, the problem began with disobedience to God's command. You see, the Lord gave clear commands to both Cain and Abel regarding the kind of offering that they were to bring. You might say, "Now, wait a minute, I don't see that in the text." It's actually not in Genesis 4 but I believe it would be inconsistent with the character of God to reject an offering where no prior instruction had been given, don't you? That would be very capricious on the hand of our God and he is certainly not that way. We also have that hint that we read about earlier in 1 John 3:12, for what reason did Cain slay Abel? Because Cain's deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous. Well, on what basis was Abel's offering deemed righteous and Cain's deemed evil unless there was some sort of an objective standard? We also have this commentary from the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 11:4, "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks." So much so that a judge down at our County Courthouse would actually quote this very story. You'd better believe he still speaks.

Well, by faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice. Faith, always in the Bible, is an objective standard. So I believe that God gave Cain and Abel clear commands about the nature of the offering that they were to bring and the problem began when Cain disobeyed the commands of God. Now, thread it back together. You might say, "Well, what does that have to do with this matter of practicing tangible love?" The answer is: the person like Abel who is in the habit of obeying the clear commands of God is in a much better position to choose to love others regardless of the price in the moment because that's just another step in your obedience where as if you're constantly finding ways to justify your disobedience like all of us to some degree do, well, you'll probably result in finding ways to justify your lack of love to those the Lord has placed around you in the moment.

Well, how did the Lord respond to Cain's disobedience? Here's the answer: he rejected Cain's offering and he should've. Call that the grace of rejection. Call that the grace of discipline. It was not in Cain's best spiritual interest for his disobedient offering to just be accepted anyway. By the way, what should Cain have done at that moment? The answer is: he should have immediately accepted his discipline because his disobedience is what brought it on in the first place. Like the person who receives a traffic ticket and then grumps about the policeman who gave him the ticket. Instead of saying, "Maybe I shouldn't have been speeding," not that I would know anything about that process. That's not what Cain did. The Bible tells us amazingly, Cain became angry and his countenance fell. Seriously? Getting mad at God? Doing the poochy lip thing with God? Which starts to get at the core issue here, friends. You see, part of the opposite of love that we have been working on all year and part of the opposite of tangible love that John is calling us to in this text, the opposite of that in part is selfishness and Cain's focus is not on pleasing

God, it's not on serving his brother, it's on his own pride, his own shame, his own embarrassment, his thought of what repentance would cost him at that moment.

What we have next is essentially a counseling session which shows the grace of God. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry?" Great question. Maybe you had some opportunities to ask yourself that this week if you were wise. "Why are you angry and why is your countenance fallen?" Then listen to this, "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up and if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you but you must master it." In other words, your disobedience is producing guilt, producing shame, intended to motivate you to repent but if you selfishly play the victim here, imagine that? After all he had done, selfishly playing the victim, God says, "That approach to life is like a lion crouching at the door waiting to devour you. You have to master your selfishness right away."

Well, did Cain listen to the counsel of the wonderful Counselor? No, which says that the next step in this process was selfish and stubborn response to confrontation in this time and in this instance from God himself, which is why the book of Proverbs would later say, "The wise of heart will receive commands," Cain you should have listened. You should have repented, "but a babbling fool will be ruined." Interesting juxtaposition of thoughts there, huh? A babbling fool? It's bad to be a fool, it's really bad to be a babbling fool. Proverbs 12:15, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes," true that, huh? "But a wise man is he who listens to counsel." Proverbs 15:5, "A fool rejects his father's discipline, But he who regards reproof is sensible." And I hope right now you're not thinking about anybody other than yourself and all of us would do well to ask ourselves how we respond to the convicting power of God, how we respond to the loving confrontation of other people and then connect that logically to this issue of being able to show tangible love in the moment. You see, we all have aspects of our character that is deeply selfish. Maybe just a little nod might help us right there. Question at this point in the text is: do we act like we really believe we need the confrontation of God? We need the confrontation of God's people to help us put off our selfishness progressively to be in a better position to practice tangible love. Don't be like Cain.

Well, what came next? It was unrestrained violence, "And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." That is what is emphasized repeatedly in John's retelling of this event in our key text. "You murdered your brother. You murdered your brother. You murdered your own brother. Why? Because his deeds were righteous and you envied him. You were jealous of him and you became a violent man." This topic of spousal abuse and child abuse has been all over the news because of what's occurring right now in professional sports. Compare that issue, spousal abuse, in whatever form it might take, child abuse in whatever form it might take. Compare that to the love of a father for his son that we saw in the video at the beginning of our service. On the one hand you have Abel-like love, on the other hand you have Cain-like hate. Do you see the progression? The blindness of how words or actions are causing pain to others? It doesn't matter anymore what comes out of that mouth. It doesn't matter anymore what you do with your body. Your selfishness is increasing and your indifference to the needs of others is increasing as well. What God said to Cain was right,

"sin is crouching at the door like a lion." Did you hear that? "It wants to master you." Which by the way, is proof that you could take an unrepentant selfish person to the best counselor on the face of God's earth and they may not change. Cain proves that point.

Well, I want to be sure that it is very clear to everybody here, especially the men, that we will intervene in accusations of spousal or child abuse without hesitation. Has everybody got that? I've had this sad responsibility to have to make this point publicly recently. Faith will always come down on the side of those who are weak or those who are abused and if you feel like right now, if you feel like as a wife, if you feel like as a child, you are in that situation and you don't know what to do, I want to ask you, I want to invite you, I want to urge you, to bring that to the attention of one of our deacons, to one of our pastors, and I promise you that we will act on that right away. I hope the men of our church would say, "I want to be in a local church environment where I am going to be held accountable for the way I treat my wife, for the way I treat my children, the way I treat all women and children in my life." If we're not going to get on that, then we have no business calling ourselves a church.

Now, let me also say something to those of you who are raising boys. Let me see if I can just offend everybody here. I've been out of the country, I'm heading out of town again so it's a perfect Sunday for me to just let it fly. On the one hand, moms: if your boy is just act like a boy, let him be a boy. Don't try to make your boy into a girl. Okay, girls are fine. I'm not against girls. I like girls. My wife is a girl. There is a lot about that I like. My daughters are girls. I mean, I'm glad for girls but if God gave you a boy, let him be a boy. There are certain things that boys just do so if you come in and you've got something in the crockpot and your son has his nose in the crockpot, don't chide him for that. You say, "Way to go, son. Way to be a man. That's what men do." Do you hear me on that? I know I'm off my notes but that's just the way it is. Don't try to make your boy into a little girl. By the way, now that you've got me on that subject, don't try to change your husband into a girl. There are some things that men do because God made us that way. Male and female, we've got some male stuff. That's just the way it is. So if your husband is sitting over there and he just went out and he mowed the lawn and he's all stinky and smelly and now he's sitting there on your living room couch just stuffing some chips in his mouth or getting crumbs all over the place, don't say, "Honey, that's gross." It would be gross if a girl was doing that but that's what men do so just say to him, "Man, you are such a hunk. That aroma just turns me on." I feel better now, don't you? With all seriousness, you need to raise your boys to treat women and children with respect and raise them to treat women and children with gentleness and honor.

Now, where did this part of the story end? It is very, very instructive and it's absolutely amazing. It shows where the depth of unrepentant sin will take you: portraying oneself inappropriately as the victim. Amazingly, Cain's focus is not on what he just did to his brother or what he just did to his parents but instead his just and gracious punishment. You realize the fact that Cain is still talking is evidence of God's grace. If I were God, the text would have read, "Cain became a greasy spot on the carpet." So the fact that he can say anything is an evidence of God's grace and yet what does he say? "My punishment is too great to bear." Somehow, Cain made himself the victim in this story which is

absolutely outrageous when anyone chooses to do that. But that's where the road of selfishness leads. That's why God so clearly and graciously warned Cain against it. No wonder John would say to us that we are to "love one another not as Cain." I would encourage all of us to look down through this progression and ask: is it possible that I'm not as effective and faithful at practicing tangible love because I have allowed myself to move along some points in the trajectory of this Cain-like selfishness? This issue of being jealous about someone else. This issue of being envious of someone else that has to be put to death and put to death right away.

Now, let's go back to 1 John. What is emphasized next? I realize you might say, "Wow, this is a pretty heavy message. Can we have Pastor Green back?" Well, there is a lot of hope here. Tangible love talks less and does more. Yes, it's heavy because the text is heavy but again, there are reasons for hope if we follow this argument carefully. You can do this in a way that is spiritually alive. Sure, there are some people who are going to hate us. John says that so it's not just a matter of avoiding the way of Cain ourselves but also understanding we may have some Cains around us. Then John says this, I tried to pointed out as we were reading. "We know that we have passed," here it is, "out of death into life." What does that mean? That means that if you know Christ as Savior and Lord, you have been united with Jesus in his resurrection. That's the Gospel indicative, preaching the Gospel to yourself. It's a very important aspect of our union with him. And Christ living in you is part of what should give you hope that you can progressively take steps to slaying selfishness and replacing it with tangible love. Because I hope when I read this text and I hope when we've been talking about it already, I hope you have enough spiritual authenticity to say, "This does not come naturally. I'm in trouble here because I kind of like selfishness better." That's what comes automatic, huh?

But the text says that we have "passed from death unto life." Paul made that same point in his crucial sanctification text, Romans 6 where he said, "Even consider yourselves," legizomai, you have to choose to think of this way about you. "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead," boom, "and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Theologian John Stott said it like this, "Becoming a Christian is nothing less than a resurrection." There is some good news, huh? That's why we don't have to be like Cain. "It's nothing less than a resurrection or a quickening out of spiritual death and into spiritual life."

That by the way, is why this message is a good opportunity for every last one of us to do what the Apostle Peter calls "making the calling and election sure." In other words, being sure that you know that you're on your way to heaven, that you have a personal relationship with Christ. You might be hearing this message right now and you're saying, "Do you know what? I am jealous of others like Cain. I am envious of others like Cain. I am selfish like Cain. I do become violent like Cain either inwardly or outwardly." Do you recognize, friend, that might be a demonstration that you don't genuinely have a personal



relationship with Christ and don't get mad at me about that. I'm trying to love you right now. And don't get mad at God about that. Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? It very well may be that God would use a message like this to speak to some who are here about the fact that you don't yet know Christ.

Well, what should you do about that? Repent like right now. Which means turn around and acknowledge your need and place your faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord while you have the opportunity to do so and the Scripture says that at that moment, what were we singing about earlier? "In that moment," you don't want me to break out into song here, do you? "A glorious surrender." Salvation is that and in that moment theologically, you are passed from death but into life and the Holy Spirit working inside of you can help you take steps toward accomplishing tangible love. It's love that is attentive to needs.

Now we're getting to the crux of the matter. John says, "whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart," there it is, "against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" By the way, you realize you can plow that the other way? Whoever has this world's goods, that would be us, by the way, huh? Everybody in this country has the world's goods. If you are standing in line for an iPhone 6. Man, is that thing big, by the way. Why would you want to have a loaf of bread up against your head? Anyway, that's not in the text either. We have the world's goods and when you see your brother in need and you open your heart, but when you open your heart, that shows that the love of God is abiding in you. That's one of the reasons I'm very thankful for our church family. I mean, we are imperfect in a lot of ways. I acknowledge that. I mean, look at your pastor. But our heritage includes the clear desire to marshal our resources to meet the needs of people here and around the world. In fact, honestly, I have to be very careful, I sort of function as a gatekeeper in some ways about how many things are actually going to be brought to our church family and the reason I do that is because I don't want to take advantage of this church family's generosity by bringing too many things to this point because I know there are a lot, not a little, there are a lot of people who attend this church and would say, "I feel most alive when I'm giving. I feel most alive when I'm serving."

I mentioned that I've been out of the country, I've had the privilege along with Dr. Hodges to be in Brazil this past week in the city of Fortaleza and I had the privilege of working with those dear men and women from dozens and dozens of churches around that part of Brazil. They had all gathered to learn how to use God's word to help those in their respective cities who are hurting. There is another conference that some others from our church, actually the first one we did in Brazil down in São Paulo that's held in the summer time. That particular conference had between five and 600 people there. Completely maxed out the hotels in the city. This one in Fortaleza, completely maxed out, their particular seminary where that is held. How did that happen? Humanly speaking, how did that happen? In part, you see that's a partnership that we developed with some Brazilian national leaders but it's been part of a strategy. For example, our church for decades now has been supporting missionaries to go to Brazil like Jack, a surgeon who started a medical clinic up on the Amazon. I had the privilege of staying

with a surgeon this week who followed Jack in that ministry. Fascinating conversations with him. We've had the opportunity to serve and support Bill and Nancy Moore, faithful lifetime missionaries there. We continue to support the Yoder's and their R. and so people from this church, they don't make a big deal out of it but week after week, month after month, they are giving financially to support our missionaries who can work in places like that.

Then we have our Biblical Counseling Training Conference here in February. So, what's that got to do with it? A number of the leaders from Brazil have been here in February and you provided housing for some of them and you did all sorts of things in order to make that kind of training available. Then, you were willing to sacrifice and give in order to make a seminary possible and seven years ago, my translator in Brazil chose to become a student at the seminary. He got married and brought his new wife who barely spoke English and had never seen snow to Lafayette for three years and now guess who is one of the major teachers in that conference? Sasha Mendez. We have Lucas and Bella who are with us in our seminary right now. Again, with their leadership partnering with us, we started that conference down in São Paulo and now this one in Fortaleza.

The exciting thing is that this one that I just participated in, the vast majority of the sessions were taught by nationals. They were taught by trained Brazilians in Portuguese. They don't need the Americans anymore and that's exactly the point. In fact, they are telling me that they are getting ready because of growth to start a third one in the north part of the country in the city of Manaus and they are planning to have a Track One there next year. It's highly likely that they won't need any Americans to teach that material because they have enough trained Brazilians which is exactly what we want. They are asking us to continue to back fill with our physicians and some of the specialty topics so we'll continue a relationship with them. Being a pastor is just a marvelous privilege because you have the opportunity to be with persons like that and I kept thinking, "I wish our whole church family could be here. I wish our whole church family could be here." But humanly speaking, that happened because there are a bunch of people around here who know how to practice tangible love. When you see needs around the world, you open your heart to them proving that the love of God abides in you and isn't it a marvelous thing to partner with something that's making a difference around the world? Thank you for doing that.

John goes on to say that it's a love that is active. "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." I'm so glad also for what's going on with our youth ministry just as an example. I love the job that Pastor Johnny is doing. By the way, he and Tori are at the hospital right now having a baby and so pray for them. We're excited about that but I'll tell you, Johnny gets it. I'm glad for my pastoral staff. They get this matter of community-based ministry. So it was time for them this summer to take a mission trip and they took it to downtown Lafayette and they spent a week just meeting needs of people all around this community. I think it's possible for the teenage years to become very selfish and very self-focused and I'm glad that our youth ministry is trying to train young people to look for needs and then seek to meet them. I was walking around yesterday a little bit when I got back with all of these community leagues. Have you ever

been out here on a Saturday? These athletic fields are filled with your neighbors and community leagues. They are not church leagues. I hate church leagues. I believe church leagues are of the devil. Not that I'm opinionated or anything and I do get off my notes from time to time but they are community leagues where we're just trying to love on our neighbors. It's packed. Well, last Saturday Johnny and our intern Matt who works with him, had a number of the teenagers out there and they were grilling hot dogs or something and they were taking them around to people in the crowd. Just an act of love. And I love the fact that teenagers are being taught in that way.

I would encourage you if you're not in this habit already, based on that verse, to say to your wife or your husband, to say to your parents, to say to your kids, "Hey, what can I do to show you love today? I've got a block of time here. I'm going to have a block of time later in the week. What could I do with that time that would just show love to you?" Also, there are some resources and let me show you how to get there. I'm not Mr. Tech. Let me read you that quote first of all because I don't want to skip it. That's from CS Lewis, "It's easier to be enthusiastic about Humanity with a capital H than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved or otherwise unattractive." Stop staring. "Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular."

Now, there are some resources and you can go to our website to the Preview section and then if you click on the "Faith East Preview," it will take you to a couple of documents that you can actually download. One of them is a list of over 100 ways a husband can show love for their wives. Another one is a list of ways wives can show love for their husbands. The wives' is far shorter, I never understood that. Anyway, here's the way it works guys: you don't just read the ways that you shall love your wife. That's not the way it works. Take it with a cup of coffee, your wife's favorite coffee and a highlighter and sit her down and say, "Babe, would you please highlight the five or 10 of these that would show love to you the most. I probably can't act on 103 at once but if you show me the ones that show love to you the most, I'm on it." You might even want to highlight the one that says, "Take her bass fishing." That sounds like a good one but anyway, here's the deal. When she gives it back to you, you get the deal? Then you have the privilege of working on those. Don't insult her. It's like a slap in the face if you ask her to do that and she does it and then you don't work on it. Wives, don't do this: don't say to your husband, "Well, you ought to know it already." Seriously? If your husband wants to show love, don't give him, "He ought to know." He doesn't know. Let me speak on behalf of every male on the planet, we're dumb. We're dumb. But if you tell us we'll try. That's the best we've got. If you tell us. I know the guy who ride the horse with the fluffy blonde hair knows but we are not him. You see, now you've got me on Fabio again. Wives, there's also one for you. I am so far off my notes. Wives, there is one for you and give that to your hubby as well. Let's have marriages that are characterized by loving each other. Let's have families that are characterized by "love one another not as Cain." Not as Cain.

Well, if you do that, it will be convincing. That's what the text says. It will be convincing. It will be convincing to other people in your life. We want those around us to be overwhelmed with evidence that we love them but what the text talks about is it will

actually convince ourselves. Remember, one of the purposes of this book according to John is that we would have greater assurance of our salvation. The more you're practicing tangible love, the more you are sure that you belong to God. John MacArthur summarized this text like this, "For John therefore, the difference between Satan's children and God's children could not be more distinct. Those who murder, habitually hate or are chronically self-centered and indifferent to the needs of others don't have eternal life but those who as part of their repentance from sin and trust in Christ have renounced murderous hateful attitudes and all cold, selfish indifference to the needs of others, give evidence that they have been born again. In place of those sinful traits, Christians manifest genuine love to others especially fellow believers because of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. They sincerely obey James' injunction "pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world." Look for ways to show loving deeds.

Now, it's important to note the way this discussion ends and I hope you've been seeing as you've read through this book many times now, John is kind of cyclical in his argumentation because the way it ends and it ends well, is telling us that tangible love depends on the power of God because if you're honestly evaluating your life in light of this text, I assume you're saying, "I am in big trouble." Well, not if the Holy Spirit resides in you. "The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

Well, is the assignment pretty clear? Love one another not as Cain. I would encourage you to evaluate yourself on how well you're doing in the matter of practicing tangible love and get some input from those around you in your life about how you can do that better.

Will you stand with me now for prayer?

*Father in heaven, thank you for this text. Thank you that the Holy Spirit stands ready to help us progressively put off selfishness and replace it with a heart and life that loves not just in word and tongue but in deed and in truth. Lord, I pray that that would be progressively true of each one of us and I pray that it would be true of this church family. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.*