



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

John: The Beloved Disciple FOLLOW ME: THE STORY OF DISCIPLESHIP Various Scriptures Steve Lombardo | June 25, 2023



I am the campus pastor at our Plano campus and I'm super pumped to be here this morning. I was part of this church a long time ago. Can you believe it's been five years since this church sent its best and brightest to the work in Plano? I'm excited to be back. Pastor Tim is at Plano preaching this morning, so we've just switched places. He's preaching on Judas and I get to preach on John. I'm thankful how it worked out for me to preach about John to you guys.

John is called the disciple of love or the beloved disciple. The reason he's called that is because John calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He writes about love like crazy. In the Gospel of John he mentions the word love 60 times. That's more than the synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—combined. Then in the little letter of 1 John, which you can read in four or five minutes, he mentions love 50 times. So it's an incredible thing we'll experience today as we talk about God's love for you, from John's perspective, from John's life, from John's writings.

John wrote much of the New Testament. Can anybody tell me who wrote two-thirds of the New Testament? Paul. Then who wrote the second most in the New Testament? Luke. Then we have John. He wrote the Gospel of John, and 1, 2 and 3 John.. And what else? Revelation. We'll look at all of that today in the time we have together.

I have been praying that God would change you. To be quite honest, I've been praying that God would change me. I pray that God will change us as we experience His great love for us. God is in the life-changing business. He wants to change you. The main thrust of today's message is that **the love of God can change your life forever**. It really can and we're going to talk about how that happens. God saves people, then He changes people. He doesn't just save you and leave you the way you are. He loves you the way you are. That's a great thing.

Maybe you're far from God today. You've drifted away and are involved in things you shouldn't be involved in. Do you know God loves you just the way you are? He loves you before you clean yourself up. He loves you before you do a good job. Romans 5:8 says, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (NIV). That means Christ died for us when we were lost in our sin and far from God, just the way we were. But then when God saves us, when we come into a relationship with God, when we trust in Jesus, He loves us too much to leave us the way we were, so He begins to do a work in our lives to change us. That's reflected in our three D's of discipleship here at Village. At my campus last week, they got it right away. So no pressure for you guys, but let's see if you know the three D's of discipleship.

The first one is **Discover**; that we would be discovering disciples as a church, that people would be discovering Jesus. And then after you discover Jesus, the second D is **Develop**. That's the topic today, developing ,growing and changing, so we would be different people, different Christians, than we were a year ago. And then a year from now, we need to be different than we are today. That's so we can do the third D, which is **Deploy**. It's so we can go out and do the work God has created us to do, so we can use our spiritual gifts in the life of His Kingdom and His ministry.

I'm curious—how many people volunteer in some way here at Village? Raise your hands. Lots of you do. That's great. So you're using your spiritual gifts—the talents God has given you—to do His work. You're being deployed.

Now, part of this development happens when, as Christians, we are called to participate in it. We don't do anything to save ourselves, but then when we're saved, we need to participate with God in our sanctification—becoming more holy. We have to work with God, we have to make decisions. It doesn't just happen automatically. We have to be involved in our life change.

Dream experts tell us there are two main types of dreams. The first type of dream—the typical dream—is that you are observing the dream. You have no control over it. You are just going through the motions, experiencing and seeing the things that are happening in the dream.

This past week I had a dream that I was here, in the lobby, the song was wrapping up, so it was time for me to come up here but I didn't have any sermon notes. I had my Bible, but I didn't know what I was going to preach on. "I can't believe this. I thought I had an outline." Pastor Phil was putting my microphone on me and said, "You've got 30 seconds." I'm like, "What am I going to do?" I had no choice in that. That's one kind of dream.

There's another kind of dream, though, that sleep experts call a lucid dream. A lucid dream is where you participate in the dream. You actually make choices in the dream. Sometimes you know it is a dream and you can choose to do whatever you want in that dream. If you want to jump off a building and fly, you can do that. How many people have dreams in which you can fly? That's a pretty cool dream, right? You are actually making decisions in that.

That's the type of life God calls us to as Christians. It's not the passive life, where we just believe in Jesus and then go about life, where whatever happens just happens. No, it's that we believe in Christ and have our affections changed, because we know He loves us and died for us. As a result, we begin to make decisions to live for Him, to make choices, to grow up in our faith, to become more mature. Now, this doesn't happen overnight. Okay? It's not perfection; it's growth.

This past week, all the vehicles in our family broke down. We have two vehicles, my son has one vehicle, and all of them went down. It was a very frustrating week. I know, most of the world doesn't have one car, so I realize this is a first-world problem. Last night I was putting a battery in our minivan, but I didn't have the correct tools to do it. I was getting frustrated. Now to be honest with you, I didn't feel very pastoral when I was putting that battery in. Not just pastoral; I didn't feel very Christian when I was putting that battery in. Then I remembered a quote I'm going to share with you today and it made me smile, even through my anger. An old Southern Baptist preacher used to say, "Before coming to Christ, I used to cuss at the drop of a hat. But since coming to Christ, it takes a lot longer than that."

That's what it is to be a Christian. God's grace is awesome. He gives us second chances and helps us up. But are we moving onward and upward to become more like Jesus, to grow up in our faith? Let's look at how this takes place.

The love of God can change your life forever! How?

God's love changes the way you live. It changed John's life big time. Look at Mark 3:16-17. Here Jesus is calling His first disciples. *"He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder)."* He calls Peter, then He calls James, the older brother of John, then he calls John and He gives them this name, "Boanerges," which is translated as Sons of Thunder. Boanerges is a Hebrew word from which we get our English word "rage." So this name means someone who is filled with rage, who has a fiery disposition. It might be like a fired-up preacher who doesn't always have the right intentions. John was a Son of Thunder.

Now, there are some descriptions in the Gospels of this Son of Thunder that I want us to look at. We need to understand what John was like. Go to Luke 9, where there are three scenes right in a row which paint a beautiful picture of who John is. Look first at verse 46: *"An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest."*

Another Gospel says Jesus came in while they were arguing and they all got quiet. "Jesus is here." Have you ever done that? You walk into a room, somebody has been talking about you and all of a sudden they're quiet? That's what happened with the disciples. Look at verse 47:

⁴⁷ But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side ⁴⁸ and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

You might say, "Well, John isn't mentioned here. It just says 'among the disciples.'" I'm willing to bet that John is right in the mix. There's another story in the Gospels where we read that his mom, Salome, goes to Jesus and says, "Jesus, for James and John, can You have one sit on Your right hand in the Kingdom and one sit on your left hand?" She wants her boys to be part of the power structure. So if you're asking me, I'm willing to bet that John and James are right in the middle of this argument with the 12.

Now in the next picture, John is actually the one who is speaking. Look at verse 49 and hear the emotion in his voice:

⁴⁹ John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us."

⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."

John is fired up. Here's some other person doing what they do, but he's not on Team Jesus. "Jesus, want me to take him out?" Okay, that was my paraphrase, but I can imagine him saying that because the last story shows him doing just that. Look at verse 51:

⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. ⁵³ But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ And they went on to another village.

Man, John would take out the one guy in verse 49, because here he's saying to Jesus, "Let's take down the whole town." Right? Son of Thunder. He's fired up. He's filled with rage. So how do we go from this picture of John to the way John writes the Gospel of John, 1, 2, and 3 John and in the book of Revelation?

In 1 John 4, we read the verse that we know as a song: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loveth is born of God." That's lovely 1970s music. Can't we love each other? What happened to John that he came to speak of the love of God? He speaks of how we can experience it and how we can share it with others—after the picture we just saw in Luke 9?

Here's the answer: he was with Jesus. John was at the cross. All the other disciples left, but as we read in John 19, John was there. John was there when Jesus had the nails driven through His hands and feet. Jesus was calling out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Do you think John was thinking, "Father, forgive them"? Or was he thinking, "It's time to get the fire thing going. My best friend, my Messiah, my Lord, is dying. Why isn't He calling down fire from heaven?"

He could have called ten thousand angels, the old hymn writer said, but He didn't. Jesus died for the sin of the people and John saw it. "*Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13). Jesus said this and John saw Him do it.

The key to being changed in the way we live is to have an encounter with Christ. Here's the first application: some of you need to come to faith in Christ and believe for yourself. Maybe you come to church because your kids want you to or your wife wants you to. You're familiar with it, but if you're honest, you've never taken that step of faith yourself. You've got some questions, you've got some doubts and you've never taken that step to believe in Jesus Christ. You need to come today to believe Jesus died in your place.

John says this in 1 John 4. After the part I sang, here's what John says in verses nine and ten:

⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Jesus came out of love from God to fix your sin problem. He paid for your sin on the cross. He died in your place, so that you wouldn't have to pay for your sin, so that you wouldn't have to die, so that you can have eternal life, so you can have a relationship with God. You can be right with God for all of eternity, not on the basis of your love for Jesus or your love for God, but on the basis of His love for you—and it's demonstrated on the cross.

Believe in that today. Believe in Jesus. You don't have to have perfect faith. You can still have questions. You can still have doubts. You're not going to make it to heaven on the coattails of your godly grandparents. You're not going to make it to heaven on the basis of your parents or children. It's what you do with the risen, alive Savior Jesus.

Now, some of you have to be real with yourself. You've called yourself a Christian. You know the right words to say, even the correct prayers to pray (if there is such a thing). But it's time to make a decision to live it out. In 1 John 3:18, John tells us this: "*Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*"

Anybody can speak the game, but who can actually do it? Anybody can say they love their spouse, but how do you prove it in the way you live? Anybody can say, "I'm a Christian," but it actually is proven by the way you live. You need to be honest and you come to a place where you embrace the change of life to which Jesus is calling you.

Now you say, "Ah, Pastor Steve, I hear you, but how do I practically do that? I've asked Jesus into my life, I believe in Him, but I still am struggling with the same sins and addictions; there are things that are weighing heavily on me. I can't seem to get past it. I can't seem to change."

Let me give you four biblical, practical steps to have God change your life. Remember, we're participating in it.

Believe that change is possible

This is for you. You must believe it. Now, this doesn't mean being perfect. It doesn't mean being without doubt. I love the man in Mark 9 who comes to Jesus and asks Jesus to heal his son. Jesus says, "Do you believe?" The man says, "I believe. Help my unbelief." That's being completely honest. There were some doubts. There were some questions. Yet did Jesus say, "I'm not going to heal your son, because you have some doubts and questions"? No. Jesus healed the man's son.

You have to have faith to believe, but it's not important how much faith you have. The important question is who is your faith in? Jesus says if you have the faith of a mustard seed, you can move mountains. So come with all your questions. Come with all your doubts. Come with all your concerns, but believe that Jesus died for you and that He can change you, that He can do a work in you.

Deal with sin in your life.

Do you want to change? Confess your sin to the Lord. Maybe some of you became Christians as children when you prayed for Jesus to come into your heart. He did just that through His Spirit who came to live inside you.

In Ephesians 4:30 we read, "*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*" Grieving the Holy Spirit is doing things He doesn't want you to do. These are the sins of commission. Think back on this past week. Was there a time when you had a decision to make; you could do this thing or not do this thing. You knew that thing was sin, you know that it was wrong, yet you decided to do it. That grieves the Holy Spirit of God who lives inside you. Confess that to Him. Confess that to Him now.

The second type of sins that we read about in Scripture is what's called "quenching the Spirit of God." There's a short little verse in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that says, "*Do not quench the Spirit.*" Quenching the Spirit of God is not doing the things that He asks you to do. So you get on an airplane, you sit down, and God's Spirit is telling you to share your faith with the person sitting next to you. But you think, "God, I'm tired today. God, I don't want to have this conversation with this person. Just to be honest, I don't really care about this person. So get off my back, God." That's quenching the Spirit of God, not doing what He asks you to do. Confess that as sin.

So sins of commission are what you commit; sins of omission are what you're not doing that you are called to do. Confess those sins to the Lord. First John 1:9 says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Confess your sin to Him.

Now, maybe some of you have a problem with unforgiveness in your heart. Maybe you don't even know that you do. I challenge you today to get with God, just you and Him. You could do it now if you want. Just ask the Holy Spirit—He's a person, you know, "Reveal to me anybody I need to forgive in my life," then see who He brings up. When He brings it up, forgive. Confess sin.

So the practical biblical ways we allow God to change us is to believe that change is possible and deal with sin in your life

Ask God to change you.

Jesus says, "You have not because you ask not." Jesus tells the story of the persistent widow who goes to the unjust judge and keeps pursuing justice. He keeps denying her, but she keeps approaching to him. She keeps going to him, she keeps pleading with him. Finally, just to get her off his back, he gives her the justice she deserves. Jesus says, "How much more will your loving heavenly Father give all good things to those who ask." Go to Him. He's not the unjust God; He's the good God, the loving God, the just God. Go to Him. Go to Him. Go to Him.

Maybe some of you are struggling with addiction and you've even stopped asking God to help you. Or maybe you have a child dealing with an addiction and you're praying and praying and praying; you feel like the prayers are bouncing off the ceiling. Keep asking. Keep asking. Keep asking. The biblical way to change is to persist in prayer, asking the Lord to change you.

Ask others to help you.

This is the hardest because this will expose you. We are part of a church community. It's not a showcase for the sinless; it's a hospital for the hurting. It's a place where we come together to help one another. It's your small group where you'll be able to open up to a group of people about your real-life struggles, then they will be able to come alongside, help you, pray with you, pray for you and strengthen you in this life. We don't want to ask, though, because we feel shame, don't we? We want to have it all together. We want to be mature Christians. We don't want anybody to look down on us. So we'll just hide it.

We recently started a new group at our Plano campus, a sex addiction recovery group. There's a group of guys who come together and meet with openness, honesty a non-judgmental attitude. These guys have come together to pursue purity. They're to strengthen one another for that walk. Most of us don't want to do that. It takes a level of vulnerability.

Here's the problem. When we keep it in the dark and think we're saving face, the devil has power in darkness. That's where you really get beat up. People are thinking you're all good, but the devil is beating you up with comments like this: "You're worthless. You call yourself a Christian? You think Jesus really loves you? You're such a disappointment." Don't keep that in the dark.

Do you know what John tells us? John says, *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). That's opposite of what we want to do. It goes against our nature. But expose it, because in the light the devil has to flee. It's a beautiful thing. Then we have fellowship with each other, we encourage one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sin. We're walking in the light God has called us to walk in. These are the biblical steps to change.

Second, God's love changes the way you love. Don't love the world. We see this in 1 John 2. Go there in your Bible; I want to parse this out a little bit. We'll start in verse 15: *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

Hold on. What is "the world"? There are a lot of good things in the world. God made the world in six days and He declared it's all good. So what is John talking about in the world that we are not to love? Look at verses 16-17: *"For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."*

In this text, John explains what the world is, what we're not supposed to love. The first one is *"the desires of the flesh."* This is the desire you have within you to do that which is wrong, because it brings pleasure to you. It's extreme. It's hedonism. You've heard it said, "If it feels good, do it." There's a pleasure you seek. It doesn't matter if it hurts people around you. It doesn't even matter if it hurts you. It's going to bring some amount of pleasure. This is the desire of the flesh.

When I was in high school, I couldn't sleep one night so I went out to the kitchen. There was an unopened, brand-new box of Little Debbie oatmeal creme pies. I saw that box and thought, "Ah, that should be in my room." So I took it back to my room. By the next morning, somehow all those oatmeal creme pies were gone. That's a true story. Last week I told the Plano campus the same story, but that story was about Swiss cake rolls. You know those Little Debbie's? You're thinking, "Well, which one is true, Pastor Steve?" They're both true—and on the same night. We can joke about gluttony and high sugar content, but that's a very low-level type of sin. It's not exposing myself.

But it's reality and it's illustrative of the fact that there are some things we do in life that, if we overdo it, it's evil. Our flesh tends to overdo things because it's seeking pleasure. Now there are other things available to us that we should stay far away from.

When I was in high school, we went to a Bible camp. One of the questions that always came up with the teachers, preachers and counselors was, "In a relationship with a girl, how far is too far? Can we kiss? Can we hold hands? What's the line we should not cross?" I always wanted to get that line from whoever was the teacher. Here's the thing. That was the wrong question. The question shouldn't be, "How close can I get to sin?" The question should be, "How can I stay as far away from it as possible in my pursuit of purity?" That's another example of how the flesh is going to get in there. It can take you right to the front door of sin. So don't love that.

The second thing listed here is *"the desires of the eyes."* Now this builds on the desires of the flesh, but it speaks specifically of lust—the pursuit of that which brings satisfaction through lust, envy and jealousy. There's a sexual side to it, but there's also a jealousy part of the eyes. You see that which you don't have, so you desire to grab it and have it.

Then the last one is a really interesting term: *"the pride of life."* The word for pride here is *alazoneia*. It's a boasting, arrogant display. It can literally be translated "making empty boasts about having the cures to rid people of all their ills." That's the pride of life. Don't love the world. There's pride of life all over the place. The world claims to have answers for you and boast about it. Do you want to take care of all your needs? The world's got your answers. Let me give you a couple of them.

Do you feel a lack of satisfaction, a lack of fulfillment in your life? Do you know what will take care of that? Stuff. Get as much stuff as you can. Get as much money as possible. Go on the best vacation possible. If you get all that, if you achieve all that, then you will be happy. Then you will be fulfilled.

Now, there are two groups of people who understand this lie. Terminally ill people get it. And who else? Billionaires. Billionaires understand this. How? They're greedy. Aren't they getting as much as they can? Here's how they understand it. They're at the top and don't feel any different than when they were at the bottom. They can go anywhere. They can eat anything. They can do anything whenever they want to do it. But they realize there's still an emptiness. Mark Cuban said this when he became a billionaire: "The most important thing is time." He's not a Christian as far as I know, but he realized it wasn't stuff.

How about this pride-of-life promise? The world says it has truth. But their truth comes from government on down. It comes from culture all around us. It comes from the messages we see. It comes from the smart phone in your pocket. It says, "Here's what's important. Here's who's important. Here's how you should live. Here's how you should act. If you don't, you're going to be canceled." Nobody wants to be canceled. So you think this way about the pride of life: "Pride isn't a sin; pride is what we're proud of. We're proud of anything we want to be proud of."



This is a picture of our White House during June 2023. It's a symbol of that. This is the promise of the pride of life. You say, "Man, that's terrible." But in 2015 it was the same thing. They lit up the White House in the same exact way. I'm not even talking about gay marriage, trans

stuff, divorce rate, any of that. It's all the same. It's the pride of life. It's the arrogant boast that says, "We have the answers for you." Don't love it, John says. Don't love it.



This promise of the pride of life goes back all the way to the Garden of Eden when the devil spoke to Adam and Eve. He said, "Did God really say not to eat of that fruit? Take it. You're worth it. It's your truth." Christian, don't love this world. There are good things in the world. God calls His children to enjoy the blessings He gives. But be careful of these three realities of the world: the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride of life.

"Okay, Pastor, what should I love then What should I love?" The answer can be found in Revelation 5. Turn there with me. John, the Son of Thunder, was with Jesus. He saw Jesus crucified. He witnessed Jesus rising from the dead. It changed John's life forever. He became the disciple of love. He wrote the Gospel of John. He wrote three letters to the churches. Then he received a final revelation from his best friend Jesus—except Jesus was glorified at that time. He's not simply the Son of Man, He's the Son of God. You can read the description of Him in the beginning of the book of Revelation. In chapter four, Jesus allows John to see into the very throne room of heaven. You can read all about it. It's an amazing thing. God is on the throne, angels are around the throne and they're singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty. The whole earth is filled with His glory." Then in chapter five, a scene begins to play out in heaven and here we get to see John, the former Son of Thunder, now son of love. We see the heart he has to love the things that God loves. Look at verse one: *"Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals."*

Now, the book of Revelation is apocalyptic literature with a lot of symbols. There's a lot of meaning that isn't immediately available to us today, unless we dig in more deeply. Here God is on the throne and He has a scroll that has seven seals on it. Seven is the number of perfection, the number of God. The scroll has words on it, so this is the perfect word of God. This is the will of God. This is the salvation of God. This is the goodness of God. This is the victory of God. This is what it's symbolic of. Okay? Are you with me?

Verse two, *"And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?'"* Who can bring about the promises of God? Who can bring about the salvation of God? Who can bring about the joys and goodness of God? Who is conquering over sin, death and the devil? Who can do it? John looked around and verse three says, *"And no one in heaven"—no archangel— "or on earth"—no king— "or under the earth"—no demonic power—"was able to open the scroll or to look into it."*

Now look at verse four: *"And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it."* John begins to weep, because the salvation of God is impossible, because the will of God won't come about, because the goodness of God conquering sin, death and the devil will not happen. The things of God will not come about and that breaks John's heart. Christian, I pray that God would change us to love the things He loves.

Verse five continues with, *"And one of the elders said to me, 'Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.'"* The Lion of Judah—that's the promised Messiah of Israel. There He is, the Lion!

Then John looks, verse six, *"And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing"—so the Lamb comes from the throne of God— "as though it had been slain."* This is the Lion of Judah, but now it looks like a Lamb. Who is that, by the way? Jesus.

⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."

That's Jesus. That's what He does through His death on the cross. That's what He does for you in the forgiveness of sins. That's what He does to bring about the almighty Kingdom of God, the proclamations of God, the goodness of God and the justice of God. That is Jesus. You're telling me the One Who can take the scroll, open it up and bring the Kingdom of God to fruition, can't change your life? Ask Him. It's an amazing picture of our Savior Jesus.

This is how we are changed. We are changed, as Paul writes to the Corinthian church, from one glory to another glory, when we see Jesus and our affections are stirred for Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). It's not just that we buckle down and keep our lists of do's and don'ts. It's because we see Jesus, then our affections are stirred and it changes our life.

Five facts about love from John

John says so much about love and I want to give you five facts about the love of God from John. I pray this will assist you as you let God's love change you when you remember what love really is from God's perspective.

1. Love is not dependent on feelings; it is a decision.

Maybe you're here today, husband or wife, and you need to hear this. If you're honest, you don't feel the exact same way you felt when you first laid eyes on each other. There's going to be a different feeling even if you're madly in love. Remember that love isn't a feeling—it's a decision. John says this in 1 John 5:1-3. We read in verse two: *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."* See, the love of God is described as a decision to do what God asks you to do. Love is not dependent on feelings. They can go up, they can go down, they can disappear. Love is a decision.

2. Love isn't a given; it is a byproduct of spiritual growth.

It's not just going to happen automatically. You have to participate in it. It's going to happen specifically when you see Jesus and your affections are changed. That's when growth happens. That's why we say, "Get to know Jesus. Study the Word of God, then your affections are stirred and love begins to grow in you."

3. Love doesn't give a pass to sin; it pursues and proclaims the truth.

One of the lies in our culture is that if you love somebody, you will let them do whatever they want. Sometimes the most unloving thing is not telling somebody the truth. Have you ever thought about that? Has anybody ever had to practice tough love? It's biblical. It's speaking the truth in love. That's what we're commanded to do as believers. You might think, "Man, I just love that person. Let them do what they want." That's not loving people. Loving means bringing the truth. Not in a harsh way, not in a way that's dismissive, but with an open, honest, and loving heart, share the truth.

4. Love is the language of a Christian.

Jesus said this in John's Gospel: *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35). Love is to be our language. You can lose your temper, but remember that the way you speak makes a difference. If someone cuts you off on the road, what you say when you open your mouth makes a difference. It will be a demonstration of the reality of you being a disciple of Jesus or not.

5. Love has face-to-face interactions.

At the end of 2 John and 3 John, John essentially says the same thing. Let me read from 2 John 12: *"Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete."* Man, do we need to hear this word in our day and age. You should show some love on social media. You can love someone through a text. But there's nothing like someone who shows up and is face-to-face with someone who needs them.

True love is face-to-face love. I'm praying that you have that in your life and that you can be open and honest with people, that you can walk in the light as God works to change you for the glory of God.