

SERMON SERIES

HOLDING HOPE

A LOVE STORY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

“LIVING LOVED”

SPEAKER: BO STERN BRADY

DATE: July 27, 2025

TEXT(S): 1 John 4:7–19

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE: *This resource is designed to help you, or your group, step through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker’s message. Our goal is to help you better understand and apply B4’s teaching.*

MESSAGE SUMMARY + DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The opposite of love isn’t hate. No, according to the Apostle John, the opposite of love is fear. Unfortunately, anger and hatred are its near-constant companions. In 1 John, we’re invited to abandon fear, running back repeatedly into the home made for us within God’s committed, reliable love. Just as fear can multiply, so love is meant to, crowding out fear. When fear fights back, seeking to displace God’s love in our relationships, we need to ask ourselves, “Why? Why am I afraid to love as Jesus did right now?” And, why is it so important to love generously, without fear? As Pastor Bo writes, “Our community flourishes in direct proportion to the way our love flourishes for one another.”

LEAN IN: *These are icebreakers and warm-ups, mostly to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. What’s something you were afraid of as a kid that seems kind of funny now?
2. When you hear the word “fear,” what’s the first movie scene or story that pops into your head?
3. What’s the story of your first love? Was it a boyfriend or girlfriend? Your spouse?
A fellow student you were crushing on?
4. What’s one way someone has shown you love that made you feel safe?
5. Describe something from church this week that reassured you of God’s love.

LOOK DOWN: *These are questions about the Bible passage(s) from the message. Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:*

1. As you read 1 John 4:7-19, how many times do you see the word “love” or a form of it in this passage? Why do you think John repeats it so often?
2. Verse 8 says, “God is love.” How does that short phrase shape the rest of the passage?
3. In verse 11, John shifts from what God has done to what we ought to do. What connection does he make between receiving love and giving love?
4. Verses 17–18 talk about love being “made complete” among us and casting out fear. Based on this message’s teaching, what kind of fear is John referring to here?
5. Verse 19 says, “We love because He first loved us.” How might this verse summarize this passage, and maybe even the whole gospel message?

LOOK OUT: *These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today. Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:*

1. Where do you see fear driving people's actions in today's world, on social media, in politics, or even in daily life?
2. What do you think people are most afraid of in our world today, and how might that fear affect their ability to love others well?
3. Our various cultures all celebrate love, but how is the love described in 1 John different from the kind of love most people talk about today in your culture?
4. John talks about loving others as a response to being loved by God. What do you think motivates people to love others in a world that doesn't start with God's love?
5. What do you think keeps people from believing that God's love is real, reliable, and personal? How can we respond to those doubts with grace and clarity?

LOOK IN: *These questions help you consider how to engage the teaching for yourself. Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:*

1. Is there a relationship in your life right now where fear — specifically fear of rejection, vulnerability, or being hurt — is holding you back from loving like Jesus? Given this message, what do you want to do about that?
2. How do you typically respond when you feel afraid in a relationship? Do you move toward others in love, or away from them, and why?
3. What are some signs in your life that fear might be crowding out love, like defensiveness, withdrawal, or control?
4. Who in your life has shown you a kind of love that reminded you of God's? What impact did that have on you?
5. What would change about your life if you fully trusted that God's love is "reliable," even when things feel uncertain or hard?

LIVE IT OUT: *These practical action steps help you apply this message to day-to-day life. Choose one prompt and talk it over for 5-10 minutes:*

1. What would it look like for you to take one step toward loving someone more generously this week, even if it feels risky? How can your fellow group members help support you?
2. Find more resources and a guide for journaling throughout this series [here](#). Visit this link and engage with the content during this series.