

SERMON SERIES

HOLDING HOPE

A LOVE STORY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

“THIS IS LOVE”

SPEAKER: RUSSELL JOYCE

DATE: July 20, 2025

TEXT(S): 1 John 3:16-18

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

How do we know what love is? How do we know we are loved? These questions haunt most people because we were made for love and long to experience it. The first Christians also wrestled with these questions, and Jesus was at the center of their confusion. He had promised to return, but when? It had been a long time since He told His first disciples that. They were passing away, along with other early eyewitnesses. Was Jesus real? Did they understand Him? Was their faith even real? John, the Beloved Disciple, wrote to them with an emphatic, “Yes.” He proceeds to tell them how they can recognize what love is, and he retells the best story of all — the one where Jesus comes in the flesh and lays down His life because He loves them. Listen as Pastor Russell teases out relevant lessons for us from this rich passage.

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 the best story you've ever heard?
2. What's one small way you experienced love this week?
3. Describe something that confuses you from time to time.
4. What gives you hope? What dissipates hope for you?
5. Describe something from church this week that made you feel loved and gave you hope.

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. What does John promise that we can know in 1 John 3:16?
2. What proof does John offer that Jesus loves us, and why is this important?
3. What implications does this have for how we are to live with one another?
4. What kinds of examples does John offer about loving one another?
5. What two things does John set forth as opposites in v18?

cont.

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. What are the practical ways people in our cultures lay down their lives for others in everyday life?
2. How do most people discern the difference between wisely helping someone in need and enabling harmful lifestyles/patterns of behavior?
3. What cultural messages today make it difficult to love “with actions and in truth?”
4. With 24/7 news about “chaos and confusion” in our world, how can people guard against compassion fatigue?
5. What culturally-conditioned ways do people you know experience or witness small, sacrificial, and potentially transformative acts of love?

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. How do you typically define love, and how does John’s picture of love in action stretch or correct your understanding?
2. What fears or hesitations keep you from loving others sacrificially?
3. Who in your life right now might need tangible expressions of love, not just kind words or thoughts?
4. What resources—time, money, skills, attention—are you holding onto that God might be inviting you to share with someone who needs to experience God’s love through you?
5. Where is God inviting you to take the next step in actively expressing your love? With friends? Your family? Kids? Spouse? In your broader community?

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. Take one intentional step to simplify your schedule or budget this week to create margin for generosity and availability to others, so that you’re prepared to love “with actions and in truth.”
2. Find more resources and a guide for journaling throughout this series [here](#). Visit this link and engage with the content during this series.