

LOVE OVER FEAR

August 2, 2020

Week 1 Reading Plan

Note to Readers: This sermon series is based on Dan White Jr's book, [Love Over Fear](#). Find more information about the book and a helpful group discussion guide at the [Love Over Fear project website](#).

Day 1-

READ: [1 John 4:7-21](#)

REFLECT: Who is the source of love? What is the extent of His love for you (see [verse 10](#))? Count the number of times you see the word LOVE (loves, loved, etc). In a journal write LOVE in the middle of a page and around it write down what you learn from these verses about what God's love *looks* like, *sounds* like, *acts* like, etc.

PRAY: Praise God, for He is love, and He loves you, and He has shown you love, and He has poured His love into you. Thank Him for all the ways in which He has loved you and then ask Him to move your heart toward deeper love for Him and for others.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: the entire book (letter) of [1 John](#)! [Note: Letters were read out loud to churches, so try reading this out loud- you may "hear" it differently than when you read quietly.]

REFLECT: John's letter urges Christians to grow in faith, obedience, and love. It is not a list of "do this" and "don't do that;" rather, it emphasizes the finished work of Christ and the power of the Spirit to enable Christians to live fully devoted to Jesus. Trace this thought through the letter as you read.

Day 2-

READ: [1 John 4:7-12](#); [John 15:9-13](#)

REFLECT: In these 5 verses of 1 John, follow the direction of love: How is God's love directed toward you? Where are you to direct the love you receive from Him? 30 years before writing this letter, John the apostle sat at Jesus' feet- How do the words written in this letter connect to the words John heard from Jesus, recorded in John 15:9-13?

PRAY: If you have drifted from "abiding" in Jesus- if your living day-to-day on your own strength and not in His- turn back to the source of life and love. Confess your need of Him as you praise Him for His gift of love and life. Ask the Lord to increase your love for Him and for others.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WATCH: This [Bible Project video](#) will help you more fully understand God's *agape* love.

Day 3-

READ: [1 John 4:13-18](#)

REFLECT: “By *this* is love perfected in us...” (verse 17)- to what does “*this*” refer? Where does perfect love come from? Have you experienced this in your life? Have you seen another Christian live and act with love and not fear? In your journal make a list of fears that linger in your heart and mind then write LOVE over that list, reminding yourself that God’s love casts out fear.

PRAY: Read Paul’s prayer to the church in Ephesus ([Ephesians 3:14-21](#)). Now, [listen](#) (start at 1:32) to that prayer as Paul prays over the church and believers in AD 60, and over the church and you in AD 2020.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

STUDY: *teleios* is a the Greek word for “perfect” in [1 John 4:18](#). Learn more about the meaning of this word [here](#).

REFLECT: Based on your understanding of *teleios*, write a description for God’s “perfect love” in your journal.

Day 4-

READ: [1 John 4:19-21](#); [Matthew 22:36-40](#); [Romans 13:10](#)

REFLECT: Why is not enough to simply love God- why does He command you to love your neighbor? Go to your journal and write LOVE in the middle of a new page and around it write down what love for a neighbor *looks* like, *sounds* like, *acts* like, etc.

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Below your list, write down this short prayer, “God, who are you inviting me to move towards in love?” Write down any names that come to mind.

Day 5-

READ: [1 Corinthians 13:1-7](#)

REFLECT: These qualities of love describe God the Father and Jesus your Savior. Through the transforming power of His Spirit in your life, your love can and will grow to look like this. Why do you think Paul is emphasizing that other gifts and talents are nothing without love? What does it look like to speak with love, to act with love, to drive with love, to run errands with love, to listen with love... Look at your daily routine/schedule- how will you allow His love to permeate your day?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Consider the names God gave you yesterday. Ask Him- “God, how will this person see love from me? *Hear* love? *Feel* love?”

LOVE OVER FEAR: The Polarization Problem

August 9, 2020

Week 2 Reading Plan

Note to Readers: This sermon series is based on Dan White Jr's book, [Love Over Fear](#). Find more information about the book and a helpful group discussion guide at the [Love Over Fear project website](#).

Day 1-

READ: [Revelation 12:10](#) and [Romans 8:31-39](#)

REFLECT: Satan's name is 'accuser' and he continues to bring up accusations against us. How does that affect our tendency to accuse and belittle others? What does Romans 8 tell us about how Jesus intercedes for us and defends us? What effect should that have on your thoughts toward others?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Think of one specific person or group of people you view as 'them' instead of 'us'. Take some time to pray for God's blessing on them and also for Him to help you see 'them' as 'us'.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: "[Against Every Accusation](#)" from Desiring God about how to overcome Satan's lies.

REFLECT: If Satan is known as the father of lies and Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life" ([John 14:6](#)) which of them should be the one to judge you?

PRACTICE: When Satan throws his accusations at you this week take the advice of [James 4:7](#). Fight back with the truth and Satan will have to leave you alone.

Day 2-

READ: [Mark 9:33-40](#)

REFLECT: How do you think verses 33-36 relate to what Jesus says to John in verses 38-40? How does pride and the desire to be right or greatest affect how tightly we hold onto our biases and allow us to make monsters of those who believe or think differently than we do?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: 'Monster' is a harsh word. Whenever you're tempted this week to think of someone as a 'monster', read or recite [John 3:16](#) and see that person as a precious and beautiful soul for whom Jesus died.

Day 3-

READ: [1 John 4:7-21](#)

REFLECT: How have you seen love conquer fear? What does 1 John 4:7,8 say about how our love for God relates to loving others?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Set a reminder this week at 3:00 pm to pray for 3 people for 3 minutes and ask God to show you how to love them in tangible ways.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WATCH: Watch [this short video](#) about how the friendship extended by an African American man to Ku Klux Klan members is changing lives.

REFLECT: Who is God calling you to reach out and begin to get to know better?

PRACTICE: Make one step toward building that relationship.

Day 4-

READ: [James 1:19-27](#)

REFLECT: What do these verses say about how we should treat those who have different beliefs and opinions?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: The phrase *'bridle his tongue'* in verse 26 is an interesting comparison to the bridle uses to control an animal. What are some practical ways you can control your tongue and keep from speaking too quickly? [Think beyond merely *talking*- what does it mean to control your tongue on social media? In texts/messaging?] Share these with a friend or your Life Group this week and pray for one another.

Day 5-

READ: [1 Peter 3:8-16](#)

REFLECT: What specific attitudes does Peter tell us to have with each other? What blessings are promised for us when we obey?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Verse 9 tells us to bless others. What are some practical ways you can bless others—especially those who are different from you? Ask God to give you three opportunities today to be a blessing.

LOVE OVER FEAR: A Third Way

August 16, 2020

Week 3 Reading Plan

Note to Readers: This sermon series is based on Dan White Jr's book, [Love Over Fear](#). Find more information about the book and a helpful group discussion guide at the [Love Over Fear project website](#).

Day 1-

READ [Matthew 5:43-48](#)

REFLECT: How does the world look at this command to love your enemy? Who are your "enemies", in your neighborhood, at work, in your family, on social media? Remember, whoever they are they were created in God's image and God loves them as much as He loves you!

PRAY/ PRACTICE Listen to this 2 minute message with Daniel Fusco [How to Love your Enemies](#) . Pray for God to give you his Spirit's power and wisdom to grow in heart and mind this week in your attitude and behavior toward your "enemies."

Day 2-

READ: [Luke 6:27-36](#)

REFLECT: Think about those you see as your enemies. Does it feel like your enemy owes you something before you can do good to them? How can you forgive that debt? How far away does *loving* them feel for you?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Remember, this isn't something you can do on your own power. Pray and ask God how to forgive your enemies' debts (sins) and for the Holy Spirit to empower you to do this.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

MEDITATE: Use [this prayer](#) from The Gospel Coalition to help you pray for the grace to love hard people.

Day 3-

READ: [1 Peter 3:9-10; Proverbs 15: 1](#)

REFLECT: How can we react to others in such a way not to repay evil with evil? "Getting even" seems to be our default- how have you seen that play out in big and small ways in your life? What does Proverbs 15:1 teach you?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: With a journal, write down ways you can choose peace in your actions and in your words. Continue to pray for your enemies.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

LISTEN: [Pray for my enemies](#), a song by Bruce Carroll.

Day 4-

READ: [Romans 12:18, 20-21](#)

REFLECT: How can you *live at peace with everyone*? The beginning of this verse says, *as far as it depends on you*. There may be times when others won't allow you to live in peace with them. Think about how you can remain at peace when others will not.

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Pray that God works to take away any feeling of vengeance on your part. Pray for your enemies to live in peace with you but also with themselves and God.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: [Proverbs 25:21](#)

PRACTICE: Send an email or text message, make a phone call to someone you need to try and patch things up with.

Day 5-

READ: [Matthew 5:1-12](#)

REFLECT: These verses are the beginning of Jesus' famous "sermon on the mount" in which He describes what it means to live in His kingdom. Note verse 9- who is blessed in this verse? Jesus is THE Son of God and He is the ultimate peacemaker- His death and resurrection have brought you into restored, peaceful relationship with your heavenly Father. What will it look like for you to live as a peacemaker? Write down 2 things you can practice this week.

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Continue to pray for your "enemies" on a daily basis and ask God to change your heart toward them even if they don't change.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: [Romans 5:8](#). Remember how God treated you when you were still his enemy.

LOVE OVER FEAR: When Love Comes to Town

August 23, 2020

Week 4 Reading Plan

Note to Readers: This sermon series is based on Dan White Jr's book, [Love Over Fear](#). Find more information about the book and a helpful group discussion guide at the [Love Over Fear project website](#).

Day 1-

READ: [Luke 6:27-36](#)

REFLECT: When you consider your spiritual growth, are you more likely to measure it by how well you love those who love you or how well you love your enemies? What holds you back from treating your enemies with the type of kindness that would “expect nothing in return”?

PRACTICE: Take Derek's Next Step challenge, and make time to dwell with an enemy this week over a meal, a coffee, or a zoom call. Take time now to pray about who God is asking you to dwell with, and reach out to them today!

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ this [article](#) from Relevant magazine titled *Loving the Stranger is the Heart of the Gospel*. Reflect on the quote “Absolute hospitality is the call of the church.”

Day 2-

READ: [Colossians 3:12-17](#)

REFLECT: How well does this description of “God's chosen ones” describe you when you're dealing with your enemies or those who are hard to love?

PRAY: Slowly pray through each descriptor in this passage and ask God to reveal areas of your life where you can grow in these ways.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

LISTEN: [Open Space](#) by Housefires and meditate on the lyrics

Day 3-

READ: [Galatians 5:13-26](#)

REFLECT: This passage shows us that the desires of our flesh lead to division, but the desires of the Spirit lead to serving one another. Which desires of your flesh are “against the Spirit,” and how do they prevent you from bearing fruit in your relationships?

PRAY: Using this prayer of confession from the Book of Common Prayer, confess your sins to God and ask him to help you keep in step with the Spirit this week.

*Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.*

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ this [article](#) from The Gospel Coalition about unfussy hospitality, and consider how you might adjust your expectations for showing hospitality in your home to better serve God's kingdom.

Day 4-

READ: [Romans 12:9-21](#)

REFLECT: Among other valuable challenges in Romans 12, verse 16 challenges us to "not be haughty, but associate with the lowly." How does your reputation or pride get in the way of you associating with the "lowly"? What holds you back from "dining with sinners" like Jesus did?

Pastor Derek taught us that the meal table was ground zero for Jesus' new political order. How does the meal table break down barriers in a way that other environments can't?

PRACTICE/PRAY: Write down three people or groups of people who you feel hesitant to associate with. Now pray for each person/group and not only ask God to bless them, but also ask God how *you* can be a blessing to them.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WATCH [this video](#) about Christian hospitality from Rosaria Butterfield. (For a deeper dive into radically ordinary hospitality, read [The Gospel Comes with a House Key](#) by Rosaria Butterfield.)

REFLECT: "We live in a post-Christian world that is sick and tired of *hearing* from Christians. But who could argue with mercy-driven hospitality? What a potential witness Christians have, untapped and right here at our fingertips." -Rosario Butterfield (*The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, p.94-95)

Day 5-

READ: [Deuteronomy 10: 12-19](#)

REFLECT: In this passage when God first establishes the old covenant law with the Israelites, we see how he wants his people to walk with him and with others. Which groups of people did God call out in verses 18-19 and how should that guide us as we seek to align ourselves with God's heart?

PRAY: God reminds the Israelites to "love the sojourner" because they themselves were once sojourners. Pray and ask God to remind you who you were in the past and how you can extend love to those who are how you once were.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WATCH this 6 minute RightNow Media [video](#) from Dave Ferguson about five missional practices that B.L.E.S.S. others. [If you need a *free* RNM account, sign up for one [here](#).]

B- Begin with prayer. Ask, 'God how do you want me to bless the people in the places you've sent me to?'

L- Listen. Don't talk, but listen to people, their struggles, their pains, in the places God sent you.

E- Eat. You can't just check this off. It's not quick. You have to have a meal with people or a cup of coffee. It builds relationships.

S- Serve. If you listen with people and you eat with people, they will tell you how to love them and you'll know how to serve them.

S- Story. When the time is right, now you talk, and you share the story of how Jesus changed your life.

Love Over Fear: Compassionate Curiosity

August 30

Week 5 Reading Plan

Note to Readers: This sermon series is based on Dan White Jr's book, [Love Over Fear](#). Find more information about the book and a helpful group discussion guide at the [Love Over Fear project website](#).

Day 1

READ: [Mark 12:31](#) and [Ephesians 4:2-3](#)

REFLECT: We live in a divided world. Divisiveness lurks around every corner, in every social media feed, and in every news story. This isn't God's design for His children. According to these passages, as the Body of Christ, how should you be living? How does taking a position of curiosity help to achieve these things? In thinking about your own relationships, how might you see positive changes if you spent more time asking thoughtful questions?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Use today's prayer time to reset yourself for the week. Relationships are hard and we often get it wrong. Jesus is the best guide we have. As you pray, talk to him about the hard stuff in your current relationships and ask him to open your heart and mind to what he might have you do.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: "[Six Lessons in Good Listening](#)" from Desiring God.

REFLECT: Listening is paired closely with asking questions. What does this article say about doing that well? What's something you learned that you could implement in the next conversation you have?

PRACTICE: As you are having conversations over the next week, put one of the six lessons into action.

Day 2-

READ: [Psalm 116:1-2](#)

REFLECT: In this week's sermon, Pastor Derek taught that curiosity helps coax a heart out of hiding. One output of this compassionate curiosity is that it opens the door for deeper conversation. According to this passage, what are the two things the Lord did for David that earned his trust? How might you emulate those things in your relationships to open the door for conversations that lead to understanding?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Use this prayer time as a time of thanksgiving. As King David worships in this Psalm, thank God for hearing your voice and turning his ear toward you. Praise him for being the one you can call on forever.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: "[How to Love the Hard to Love](#)" from Desiring God.

REFLECT: The truth is, we can all be hard to love because we are sinners. Chances are you've had or have a challenging relationship with someone close to you. According to this article, what do followers of Jesus have that others don't when we are faced with a challenging relationship? How can this change your mindset when a relationship is hard?

PRACTICE: If you have a relationship that feels hard, take a few minutes to ask for forgiveness for the times you've not been understanding, or been quick to anger – whatever it might be that needs addressed with God. Pray that moving forward your heart would be opened to that person to love more like Jesus does.

Day 3-

READ: [Philippians 2:3-4](#)

REFLECT: When we take a posture of curiosity, we give away power to another instead of holding it for ourselves. Jesus models this for us in his expert curiosity and question asking. He doesn't need to prove that he's right. What is Paul teaching Christians in this passage? How might humility change how you ask questions? How does it allow for more meaningful conversation? In a moment of self-reflection, how hard is humility for you in conversation? Do you say things or ask questions to prove your own worth?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Our worth is found in Jesus. We need to go to him and seek the truth in him to find our worthiness, rather than in the things of this world. Being secure in that allows us to be humbled and opens us up to truly seeing, hearing, and loving other people. Listen to this song, "[No Longer Slaves](#)", and let it be your reminder today about whose you are.

Day 4-

READ: [Matthew 8:26](#) and [Matthew 14:31-33](#)

REFLECT: In these two passages, Jesus asks a simple question of his disciples. What happens after Jesus asks the question? What is unique about the question that he asks? How do you see the outputs of compassionate curiosity – puts you (question asker) in place of vulnerability, opens the conversation to a deeper level, and opens space for God's grace to work – come to life in this passage?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Being curious and asking good questions means we have to go deeper than the standard small talk. Spend some time today thinking through the relationships you're currently in. What are some questions that you could ask that would help you know that person better? How can you pose a question that would allow for deeper understanding? Make a list of these questions and put them in a place you can refer back to.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: "[One Simple Way to Demonstrate Love and Humility](#)" by Pastor Kevin DeYoung from the Gospel Coalition.

REFLECT: What does this article say about how to practice humility? How do our questions show love and humility?

PRACTICE: What is one take-away from this article that you can implement into your conversations?

Day 5-

READ: [Colossians 3:1-17](#)

REFLECT: Sometimes it's easy to forget why we're here on earth. Especially in a time such as right now where there is pain, suffering, and conflict everywhere, and the day-to-day can feel heavy and hard. That's not the end of our story though, because in Jesus we have hope. As followers of Jesus we are called to go out and make disciples, so that others may know him and find that same hope. How does this passage give you perspective on our eternal calling in light of our fallen world? How does it encourage you to have meaningful conversations with others?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Turn verse 17 into a prayer, "Whatever I do, whether it's with my words or in my actions, I do it for you Jesus and I give you thanks in all of it. Help me to do it well."