

**Sermon Discussion Guide**  
“The Authentic Life” Series  
Part 4: The Litmus Test of Love (1 John 4:7–21)

**Icebreaker Questions:** (*Option #1*): What are you looking forward to most this summer? (*Option #2*): What’s a tiny inconvenience that dramatically annoys you?

**Prayer:** Take a few moments at the beginning of your group time to pray for God’s presence and blessing on your discussion. At the end of your gathering, pray for one another and ask God to use your time together to strengthen your faith and make you more like Jesus.

**Read:** 1 John 4:7–21

**Big Idea:** Christians love because God first loved them. God most clearly demonstrated his love by sending Jesus to save sinners. God’s love casts out fear in his people and moves them toward Spirit-filled love for God and one another.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What was the most encouraging, convicting, confusing, or thought-provoking part of the sermon or Scripture reading to you this week, and why?
2. What’s the difference between being a “nice person” and loving people in a distinctly Christian way? What do we learn about Christian love in today’s passage? (Point to specific verses if you can.)
3. Read 1 John 4:16. What does it look like to “rely” on the love God has for us? How do you (or have you) relied on God’s love in your life?
  - a. Which aspect of God’s love described in today’s text is most encouraging to you? Why?
4. Read 1 John 4:18. How does perfect love drive out fear? How or why are fear and love connected? How have you seen this in your own life?
  - a. Is it appropriate to look to our works for assurance of our salvation? Why or why not? If so, how can we know we’ve loved “well enough”?
5. What does this passage show us about the relationship between truth and love? Do you tend to naturally lean more toward “grace” or “truth”? Why do you think that is? How have you worked on growing the weaker muscle in your life?
6. What are some common counterfeit versions of love in today’s culture? Do you feel pressured to conform to these notions of love? Why or why not?
  - a. How can we love others well without coming across as judgmental if we don’t align with all the world’s standards or values? What has this looked like in your life?
7. Where do you see the gospel in today’s passage? How does today’s text and discussion make Jesus/the gospel more precious to you?
8. What is one specific way you would like to apply today’s Scripture passage or small group discussion this next week?

## **Scripture Reading**

### **1 John 4:7–21 (NIV)**

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.