

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Perfect Love

1 John 4:16-21 (NIV)

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.

NOTES:

Context: Johannine Community and the Incarnate God

¹ *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.* ² *The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.* ³ *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.* ⁴ *We write this to make our joy complete.* (1 John 1:1-4)

God is love

“The Christian faith grows directly out of, and must directly express, the belief that in Jesus the Messiah, the one true God has revealed himself to be love incarnate...Love incarnate must be the badge that the Christian community wears, the sign not only of who they are but of who their God is.” -N.T. Wright, The Letters of John

Abiding in Perfect Love, Driving Out Fear

- *Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*
- *In this world we are like Jesus.*

Love of others (Deuteronomy 6:4, Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:37-40)

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.* (1 John 4:11-12)

“It is a false boast when anyone says that he loves God but neglects His image which is before his eyes.” -Calvin

NOTES:

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

As needed, refer to the Order of Worship and Resources at solanabeach.church for sermon video, message outline, and small group questions print version.

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Start your time by sharing your hopes for the summer season. What are you hopeful for? What are you looking forward to?

CONNECT WITH GOD *(Use the below practices or choose one from a previous week.)*

- **Listening to God through Lectio Divina (10-15 minutes)**

Alone: In a posture of stillness and openness, come to God with the intention to listen to God's voice through the reading of 1 John 4:16-21. Be prepared to read the passage 3 times. As a way of practicing Lectio Divina, choose three different Bible translations and read each translation once.

Begin with the NIV version of 1 John 4:16-21

For your second reading, choose the Message version

For your third and final reading, choose the NRSV version

Prepare

Quiet yourself and find a physical or emotional posture that prepares you to listen—to really listen—for God. Do whatever it is you need to do to be still and ready yourself to receive God's presence.

Read and Listen

When you are ready, begin by slowly reading 1 John 4:16-21. Read slowly, patiently, and expectantly. Let listening be your only goal. Pay attention to any words, images, or phrases that draw you in or catch your attention. Read the passage three times over, in the three suggested Bible versions above.

Meditate

Next, choose one phrase (or image, idea, or word) that most captured your attention. Hold that word or phrase, meditating on it, and repeating it over and over again. What thoughts, feelings, or memories come to mind? How does it connect to your life? Give pause and attention to that word. As your mind wanders, don't be too hard on yourself. Give it to God and begin again.

Pray

Turn towards God in prayer and tell God about that word or phrase. Be honest while remaining open to what God is saying as you pray. How is God using this word or phrase to draw you nearer to God and transform you?

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Together: **Read 1 John 4:16-21**

- Before digging into the scripture and message more, pray together. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate and enlighten, and to speak to each one of you through the passage.

- Alone: Reflect/journal on the following prompt:
 - What has it looked like for you to "rely on the love that God has" for you?
 - How does fear show up in your life?
 - Where do you find connection and/or disconnection with the words in 1 John 4:16-21?
- In pairs: Share your personal reflections from the prompts above. Encourage one another to engage curiosity, confusion, or bigger questions.

CONNECT WITH SCRIPTURE

Watch this Bible Project video about 1-3 John. If needed, read the passage again. Then select the best questions or customize the questions for your group.

- Review the main points from the sermon outline.
- What questions, observations, or reactions do you have after reflecting on the passage and sermon?
- Are there any themes in 1 John 4:16-21 that you recognize from the Gospel of John?
- How does perfect love drive out fear?
- How does the background and context of 1 John help you understand the message in 1 John 4:16-21?
- How do we extend love that is free from fear?
- How is this passage applicable to your life or to the world around you right now?
- What's the challenge in this passage for you? For the Church?
- What's the hope and comfort in this passage for you? For the Church?

ENGAGE AND EXPLORE

Together: Explore the prayer below by N.T. Wright in connection with 1 John 4:16-21.

"The Christian faith grows directly out of, and must directly express, the belief that in Jesus the Messiah, the one true God has revealed himself to be love incarnate...Love incarnate must be the badge that the Christian community wears, the sign not only of who they are but of who their God is." -N.T. Wright, The Letters of John

PRAYER

In stillness, begin your prayer time by asking the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind those who you have trouble loving. Pray for them, as well as for yourself. Pray that the incarnate and reconciling love of Jesus live in you. Pray that your love for others reflects the God who is love.