

Faith Talk - July 19, 2026

Series: 1 John- Life in the Light and Love of God

Sermon: What Love Does

Scripture: 1 John 3:23-24

Now this is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as he commanded us. The one who keeps his commands remains in him, and he in him. And the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he has given us.

Summary

Most of us are familiar with the inner courtroom, that place where our own conscience puts us on trial, replaying our failures and rehearsing our guilt. John addresses this experience head-on and gives us something far better than self-condemnation: he shows us what love actually does in the life of a believer and how we know for sure.

Active, obedient love, the kind rooted in God's love for us, does three remarkable things. First, it silences condemnation not by ignoring our sin but by confessing it. Second, love replaces avoidance with confidence, rather than hiding from God when we feel guilty; confession opens the door to walk boldly into His presence. Third, love aligns our prayers with God's will, so that as our hearts grow closer to His commands and desires, our prayers begin moving in the same direction as His answers.

John anchors all of this in the Holy Spirit, who is the ultimate assurance that we belong to God and walk in fellowship with Him. We know the Spirit is at work in us when we 1) believe in Jesus as Savior, 2) when we love others in tangible and selfless ways, and 3) when our lives are progressively moving in the direction of Christ's commands.

The question is not whether we are perfect but whether we are responding rightly by confessing, trusting, loving, and walking in obedience.

Discussion Questions

Conversations with Adults

- John says condemnation leads to avoiding God, which leads to more sin, while confession leads to confidence, which leads to life with God. Where have you seen that cycle play out in your own experience, in either direction?
- The idea that our prayers get answered as they align with God's commands and desires is both exciting and convicting. What would it look like for your prayer life to become more shaped by what God wants than by what you want?
- John gives three signs that the Holy Spirit is at work in us: believing in Jesus, tangibly loving others, and keeping His commands. Which of those three feels most alive in your life right now, and which one feels like it needs the most attention?

Conversations with Students

- Social media is basically a window for comparison. Who do you find yourself comparing yourself to online? What happens in your heart when you do?
- If one thing were taken away tomorrow, would your sense of who you are survive? What would shake you (grades, looks, achievements, sports, etc.)? That's probably where a throne is.
- Jesus proves your worth on the cross and gives you a new identity. Do you actually believe that's enough, or are you still looking to the world to tell you who you are?

Conversations with Kids

- Have you ever done something wrong and then tried to hide from Mom or Dad instead of telling them? What made it feel scary to go to them, and what happened when you finally did?
- John says that when we tell God the truth about our sin, He forgives us, and we never have to feel scared in His presence. What do you think it feels like to be confident, not scared, when you talk to God?
- John says we can tell the Holy Spirit is in someone because they believe in Jesus, love other people, and try to do what God says. Which of those three do you want to grow in most?

Closing Prayer

Father God, **thank You** that You are greater than our condemning hearts, that Your grace is bigger than our guilt, and Your love is stronger than our failure. Thank You that You don't ask us to be perfect before we come to You, only honest.

We ask You to give us the courage to stop circling our guilt and to land on Your grace, to confess what we've been carrying and receive the confidence You offer in return. Align our hearts with Your commands and our prayers with Your will, so that we stop rowing against You and start moving with You.

We commit to responding to Your love by confessing our sin, by loving the people around us, and by walking in step with the Holy Spirit You have given us. Reassure our hearts and make it obvious in our lives that we belong to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.