

## **Mission Impossible?**

### **How Many People Can God Love?**

**1 John 3:1-7**

#### **Faith Promise Missions**

**Pastor Andy Kinsey**

*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

**- 1 John 3:2**

#### **Prayer of Preparation**

O Lord, help us to see who you are that we may become more like you in all we do and say. In Christ's name, we pray: Amen.

#### **Message**

I don't know if you enjoy watching the movies *Mission Impossible* with Tom Cruise. Anyone here a fan? As you probably are aware, Tom Cruise plays undercover agent Ethan Hunt who is given incredible assignments to bring down the "bad guys" or the "bad girls."

I have always enjoyed *Mission Impossible*. The theme song in particular makes it worthwhile! Right?! Great stuff!

If I could put on my movie critic hat, though, I would probably say that the first *Mission Impossible* movie with Tom Cruise was the best, and then, from there, the movies have been a bit far-fetched, as they say.

However, I am also aware of the generational divide with *Mission Impossible*. How many here, for example, remember Peter Graves and his team on television's *Mission Impossible*? Another wonderful series!

Remember how at beginning of the movie or at the beginning of the show, the voice on a tape would share the words about the mission? The voice would say, "And, Ethan, if you choose to accept this mission," and then a moment later it would say something to the effect, "This tape will destruct in five seconds!"

There you go! Should you choose to accept this mission!

I suppose we could say that about all Christians, couldn't we? Do you accept the mission?

### **Faith-Promise Missions**

As we have noted, we begin what we call Faith-Promise Missions Giving today. In the worship bulletin, there is a little description about Faith-Promise Missions Giving, or the way by which we as a congregation seek to raise support for mission *beyond* our regular giving of tithes and offerings.

Faith-Promise is simply how we as a church give of ourselves to the mission of God, both inside and outside the walls of the church. And we do this by promising to *pray* for the church's mission; we do this by promising to *participate* in hands-on mission-projects; and we do this by promising to step up in giving financially to the work of mission, whether here or around the world, whether in Indiana or around the country.

Faith-Promise Missions Giving is about giving *beyond* what we think we can give, stepping out in faith, and promising to share *with God* our resources, or what God has given to us.

Therefore, like all giving, Faith-Promise Missions Giving is really about trust, about faith, that God will provide.

It is why we thought it would be good to focus on the theme *Mission Impossible?* Sometimes we *may* think that the mission is not possible; that is, we may think we cannot give to or share in God's mission. Like Caleb and Joshua spying in the Promised Land, we may think the challenge is too big; we can't possibly accomplish the task of moving into the land of promise (Num. 13:14-15). The obstacles are too large there.

And yet, if we believe as God's children that God is faithful, that God is good, then we may understand more fully how God is with us and how we do not need to be afraid (Num. 14:6-9). After all, God is a God of abundance, not scarcity (Jn. 6:1-14). God is able to do far more than we can possibly think or imagine (Eph. 3:20). Our mission, if we are to choose it, is to respond to that promise!

### **First John Letter**

It is why we thought it would be helpful to focus on John's First Letter in the New Testament as we move through Faith Promise. If you will remember, during the Lenten Season, we focused a great deal on the Gospel of John.

Over the next four weeks, however, we would like to concentrate on First John to help us to understand how *the mission is not impossible, but indeed possible, possible by God's great love in Christ.*

That's is why we want to share about John's First Letter: *God's mission is possible because of God's great love in Christ.*

It is an important point because in this particular letter, as in all the other letters in the New Testament, the author, John, is dealing with specific problems or concerns, and he is writing to address them.

For example, in John's Letter, there appears to be a problem with persons who did not believe that Jesus was God's Son; that is, they did not believe that Jesus actually atoned for sin, or that he did not cleanse us from sin (1 Jn. 2:1-2).

John addresses this problem and speaks of how such persons are deceived (1 Jn.1:8): the reason they are deceived is because *they think they are without sin.* They think they are flawless or perfect. They have become people who believe in their own hype, so to speak, and do not want to confront what they do wrong. It is why they remain in darkness (1 Jn. 1:5).

But there is another problem: if such people are saying they have no sin, or they have no need to confess sin, they are also saying that Jesus's death on the cross really has no power to affect their lives (1 Jn. 2:1). Jesus' death was for nothing.

And what John says is, "No, no, no to these things!"

The reason we are God's children in the first place, the reason we are part of God's family, is because of God's great love for us, and not simply for us, but for the whole world: either Jesus' death is for everyone, or it is for no one; either Jesus forgives us all, or he does not forgive anyone (1 Jn. 2:2)!

That's the whole point of the Gospel: that God so loved the world that God gave his Son that whosoever believes, whosoever trusts, has everlasting life (Jn. 3:16; see also, 1 Jn. 4:10).

*This* is what makes the *mission possible*: God first loving us so that we may in turn love God and love others (1 Jn. 4:19). The mission is possible because of what God has done *for* us and what God continues to do *in* us!

*It is the reason why we are in mission: that Jesus became like us that we might become like him* (1 Jn. 3:2).<sup>1</sup>

That's the very Mo-Jo that keeps us going! Take that away and there is no mission! No hope! No Gospel!

### **How Many Can God Love?**

I like to think of it this way: that as church we really do not have a mission *as a mission has us!*

Yes, our mission is to care and grow as disciples. But equally true is how God's mission of caring and growing has us, or involves us. And to the extent that we can envision God's mission *for* us, we can extend that mission *to* others – by our giving, by our witnessing, by our praying.

It is why there is really no limit we can place on God's mission, on God's love, to the number of children we can help, or to how many people may come into God's presence. As children created in the image of God, we understand ourselves to be in a mission to bless that image in all people, in all children – whether in Africa or Central America, or in Franklin or the state of Indiana, God's mission is always a *mission of love* large enough to care for everyone. That's how big God's love is!

Maybe this is one of the reasons why there were some folks in John's church who had such a difficult time accepting the Gospel: they were having a difficult time imagining how God could love those outside the people they knew!

Perhaps it is similar to the theory which states that the ideal number of friends a person can have is about 150. More than that and experts tell us our relationships begin to suffer. It seems we can maintain meaningful relationships with this number of people.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> N.T. Wright, *The Early Christian Letters for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2011), 151.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on this topic, go to [www.gore.com](http://www.gore.com).

Now, I am not talking about friends on Facebook! No! Rather, I am talking about the people we know face-to-face: in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our churches, in our schools, in our businesses. It seems we can relate to so many people.

Well, the good news is that God does not have a cap on the number of people that God relates to, that God loves! There is no limit!

If anything, we are the ones who set the limits! Indeed, it is why we really cannot turn and say, “Well, I have done my part. I have cared for my share.”

No...no...no. There is no limit to the mission of God’s love. And the reason there is no limit is because of what Christ has done for us on the cross! That’s what makes the mission possible in the first place! And it’s why we can say we all are God’s children: we all are in God’s family. Everyone one of us...and then some!

God’s mission is possible because of Christ’s love on the cross!

Yes, indeed, the mission is possible!