

Christ's Farewell Discourse

Chapter Ten

John 15:12-17

Love One Another

As we study the farewell teaching of our Lord, we should know that the disciples and Jesus left the upper room are on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. In John 15 we have three teaching topics. Number one is our relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the vine and we are the branches. And that relationship is very important. If you are not in union or fellowship with Jesus Christ that relationship needs to be taken care of now.

We need to abide in Christ and allow him to abide in us. And we need to live in loving obedience to him so that our joy can be full. The second teaching topic is our relationship to one another. This is what we will concentrate on in this chapter. The third topic for the next chapter is our relationship with a faithless, sinful world. Let's read our section of Scripture and then we'll go over it in some detail.

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.
¹⁴ You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, that you love one another.
(John 15:12-17)

The first thing we notice is that these verses are bookended by the command to love one another. If we hunger for deeper fellowship with Jesus Christ we must carry out this command. But then really, this is not an option in our lives. It is something we are to do; we are to love one another, period.

If you are thinking about love in a romantic or sentimental way you may be thinking “How can anyone command love? I mean love is our master, we do not master love.” That’s how the world thinks. You fall in love, a feeling, an emotion comes over you and that’s that. But in the ancient Greek language there were three different words for love. There was eros for romantic, sexual love. There was storge for a family kind of love. And there was agape. That is the word used here.

Agape is the kind of love that God has for us. This love is a decision that we make to bring what is needed and good and beneficial to another person. This is the kind of love that Jesus had for the disciples. And if he could love that group of arrogant, slow to learn, spiritually immature men, then surely we can learn to love one another.

Jesus loved, because God was in him through the Spirit. God is love and that love flowed through Christ to others. We are to love one another and we can, because we have God in Christ in us. And Romans 5:5 tells us that “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit [which] was given to us.” Indeed, it has been lavishly poured out to the point of overflowing!

Now, our Lord will reveal three features of this love which will mark the quality of his love for us and our love for one another. The first feature is given in verse 13.

Greater love has no one than this,
than to lay down one’s life for his friends.
(John 15:13)

The first feature is this: the one who loves lays down his or her life for the one who is loved. Jesus did this for us. He literally died a horrible death on the cross to free us from the power and penalty of our sins. But obviously to lay down one’s life means more than to physically die for one another. And of course if we actually did die for someone we could only do so once and that would be it.

So Jesus means that we are to give up our lives for one another. He means the giving of ourselves to another, even sacrificing something for the benefit of someone else. We are to bear one another’s burdens, pray for one another, care for one another, esteem others better than ourselves and be compassionate towards one another. There is a list of all the “one another”

verses at the end of this chapter. There is a full range of relationship activities that our Lord sums up in the command to love one another and to lay down our lives for each other. Now, we come to the second feature of love.

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.
(John 15:14, 15)

The second feature of loving one another is that as good friends we speak the truth in love to one another. Friends tell each other the truth, the whole truth. In Ephesians 4:15 we are told to speak “the truth in love” to one another. Or more literally from the Greek we are to be “truthing it in love” to one another. In other words our words and actions should flow from the truth of God’s Word.

And so just as Jesus made known to the disciples and to all of us what he learned from God in both his words and deed, we should do the same for one another, so we can mature in the faith. When someone is in error we correct them with the truth. When someone is fearful we replace their fear with truth. When someone is in despair we offer the truth of the hope we have in Christ. When someone is in need we live out the truth and provide what we can. Let me show you a beautiful example of this from Acts 2. This is a wonderful snapshot of the early church.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily
those who were being saved.
(Acts 2:42-47)

Just like these early believers we are to learn and share the truths of Scripture with one another. We are to joyfully help to meet one another's needs. As friends we share our lives with one another. And as friends of Jesus, do not fear to share your heart and concerns and goals with him. Now, we are still servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, because a little later on in John 15:20, the Lord calls us servants. But the difference between a servant and a friend is this: a servant does what he or she is told. A friend is let in on the reason why.

A classic example of this is God's conversation with His friend Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In Genesis 18:17 God said "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" So he revealed His plans for Sodom and Gomorrah and why, and Abraham interceded. So as friends we pray for one another, we speak the truth to one another, we bear one another's burdens—we love one another. The third feature of love is that we are to reach out to one another and pray for one another so that we bear fruit that lasts.

You did not choose Me, but I chose
you and appointed you that you
should go and bear fruit, and *that*
your fruit should remain, that whatever
you ask the Father in My name He may
give you. ¹⁷ These things I command you,
that you love one another.
(John 15:16, 17)

First, Jesus said to the disciples "You did not choose Me, but I chose you." Indeed he did. He called each one and said "follow me" and they had to decide to follow or not. But he called them so their lives would be fruitful. In the same way Romans 8 reveals that God called all of us so that our lives would not be wasted in sin. And so we must decide to look out for one another and pray that we bear fruit, not only the fruit of the Spirit, but the fruit of the many good works that flow from our love, joy, peace, faithfulness, kindness and so on.

In Ephesians 2:10 we read that we are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." But what did Jesus mean when he said we are to pray and live so that our fruit remains? Well, a few lines from an old poem answers the question.

Only one life!
T'will soon be passed.

Only what's done for Christ will last.

Indeed that is true! Let's read from 1 Corinthians 3 to learn about works that last and those that do not.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:10, 11)

The apostle Paul told the people of Corinth about Jesus Christ and the Christian life. Now they were to live their lives accordingly. In the same way someone told you about Christ, so how will you live?

Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

All of us will be motivated to live and work and share our lives either by the standards of the world or by the power and truth of the good news of Jesus Christ. All of our activities and works and words that flow from Christ's love, his compassion, his kindness, his courage—all that we do for the glory of God and the good of His people will be rewarded forever. But the works that flow from sin and selfishness—the things we do to merely impress the world will be burned up on judgment day. If we love one another, we will pray for one another that our lives produce good fruit that remains. Finally, we are at the other bookend to this section of Scripture.

These things I command you,
that you love one another.
(John 15:17)

This is the great command which makes the difference between the church, the family of God and the world. In the world you will be loved only because of what you can do for it. If you live by its ideals and give to it you will be loved.

As believers with Christ in us, we love others not for what they can do for us, but for what we can contribute to them. So let us ask in prayer what we will for the glory of God and for our own good. And let us love one another for God's glory and our own good.

Unity. One third of the one-another commands deal with the unity of the church.

1. Be at peace with one another (Mk 9:50)
2. Don't grumble among one another (Jn 6:43)
3. Be of the same mind with one another (Ro 12:16, 15:5)
4. Accept one another (Ro 15:7)
5. Wait for one another before beginning the Eucharist (1 Co 11:33)
6. Don't bite, devour, and consume one another—**seriously, guys, don't eat each other** (Ga 5:15)
7. Don't boastfully challenge or envy one another (Ga 5:26).
8. Gently, patiently tolerate one another (Ep 4:2)
9. Be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving to one another (Ep 4:32)
10. Bear with and forgive one another (Co 3:13)
11. Seek good for one another, and don't repay evil for evil (1 Th 5:15)
12. Don't complain against one another (Jas 4:11, 5:9)
13. Confess sins to one another (Jas 5:16)

Love. One third of them instruct Christians to love one another.

1. Love one another (Jn 13:34, 15:12, 17; Ro 13:8; 1 Th 3:12, 4:9; 1 Pe 1:22; 1 Jn 3:11, 4:7, 11; 2 Jn 5)
2. Through love, serve one another (Ga 5:13)
3. Tolerate one another in love (Ep 4:2)
4. Greet one another with a kiss of love (1 Pe 5:14)
5. Be devoted to one another in love (Ro 12:10)

Humility. About 15% stress an attitude of humility and deference among believers.

1. Give preference to one another in honor (Ro 12:10)
2. Regard one another as more important than yourselves (Php 2:3)
3. Serve one another (Ga 5:13)
4. Wash one another's feet (Jn 13:14)
5. Don't be haughty: be of the same mind (Ro 12:16)
6. Be subject to one another (Ep 5:21)
7. Clothe yourselves in humility toward one another (1 Pe 5:5)

Here's the rest:

1. Do not judge one another, and don't put a stumbling block in a brother's way (Ro 14:13)
2. Greet one another with a kiss (Ro 16:16; 1 Co 16:20; 2 Co 13:12)
3. Husbands and wives: don't deprive one another of physical intimacy (1 Co 7:5)
4. Bear one another's burdens (Ga 6:2)
5. Speak truth to one another (Ep 4:25)
6. Don't lie to one another (Co 3:9)
7. Comfort one another concerning the resurrection (1 Th 4:18)
8. Encourage and build up one another (1 Th 5:11)