

Jesus, on Discipleship

Love One Another

John 15:12-17

January 11, 2026

HDBC

A teacher in a creative writing class gave an interesting assignment. Write ***I love you*** in 25 words or less, without using the words ***I love you***. They had 15 minutes. One woman sat for ten minutes looking at the ceiling, trying to come up with something. Then frantically she wrote two lines.

Why, I've seen a much worse hairdo than that, honey.
These cookies are hardly burned at all.

There are all kinds of unique and creative ways to express love. How we express it is important but the reality of love is much more important. In John 15 we have some of the words that Jesus shared with his disciples only hours before he was arrested & crucified. He was helping them to understand the changing relationships they would experience after He was no longer with them in bodily form.

Though He would no longer be seen by them, they needed to abide in Him. And when it came to their relationships with each other, **love** was the key. This sounds much easier than it is. ***Lord, I love the world. It's the people I'm struggling with.*** I'm sure we've all felt that reality. You can bet those early apostles and believers struggled at times with loving each other. So, Jesus addressed it. **Read the text: John 15:12-17**

Verses 12 and 17 are the bookends of this section and offer a clear command to love one another. This is what is expected of us. The fact that the command is repeated offers emphasis. **Love is the most** important element in our relationship with each other. It is the dominate thing that Christ wants to see when he evaluates how we relate.

The **basis for this command** is His own love for us. He is asking us to do for one another what He has already done for us. In other words, He has

demonstrated it for us. **We love Him** because He first loved us. But it is not to stop there. **We also love one another** because He first loved us.

There is an interested shift in grammar. The command for us to love each other implies that it is something we must **consciously continue to do**. It requires effort & determination. When Jesus spoke of His love for us, he used a form that **speaks of a completed act**. In other words there is no possibility of it ending or changing.

Agape - highest form of Love. It includes the following shades of meaning.

To have a preference for. Desire to be with a person. Drawn toward them.

To wish well for the other person. Desire for their best.

To prize above other things. Treasure. View as something of value.

To take pleasure in. Very existence of the relationship brings joy.

Unwillingness to abandon. Never leave them behind. Slow down, if needed.

How can I love anyone else the way Christ loves me? I can only do it because of the love of Christ in me. Christ's love in me was not meant to stay there. I am not simply to be a recipient of the love of Christ, but a channel of his love.

Four phrases help us understand how we are to love each other.

1. Shared Sacrifice (13)

Interestingly Jesus begins not with the lowest level of our love for each other, but with the highest expression of love. He doesn't want us to think in terms of the minimum that we have to do to qualify as loving each other, but of **the pinnacle of love**. In doing so, he speaks of his own impending death as an illustration of what love is truly about.

Real love involves self-sacrifice, as is demonstrated in His own death. In this statement Jesus introduces a new aspect of our relationship with Him that also helps us understand our relationship with each other.

Friends sacrifice for one another. Things, time, money. If need be, they give the ultimate gift, their lives. Jesus did this. He voluntarily ***laid down his life for us***. Interesting word. **For** could be translated as **above/over**. Person standing over another to protect them from harm.

One of the survivors of the 2015 San Bernardino shootings is 27-year-old Denise Peraza. Her life was spared, not because the shooters saw her and turned the other way, but because a courageous man named Shannon Johnson shielded her body with his own and saved her life. Listen to her recount the situation.

Wednesday morning at 10:55 A.M. we were seated next to each other at a table, joking about how we thought the large clock on the wall might be broken because time seemed to be moving so slowly. I would have never guessed that only five minutes later, we would be huddled next to each other under the same table, using a fallen chair as a shield from over 60 rounds of bullets being fired across the room.

While I cannot recall every single second that played out that morning, I will always remember his left arm wrapped around me, holding me as close as possible next to him behind that chair. And amidst all the chaos, I'll always remember him saying these three words: I got you.

That is what Jesus did on the cross. He covered us with his body so that the wrath of God for sin fell upon him, though it was meant for us.

Are you giving your life for the believers in this church? Daily you have opportunity to give your life, your energy, your time, to benefit others.

2. Shared Submission (14)

You are my friends (14) That statement must have shocked his disciples. They had never thought of Him as being on the level of a friend. He was their Lord and Savior, but He wanted them to see that there was a personal relationship that He had with them that could best be seen as friendship.

However, friendship with Christ would not be one of absolute equality. He is still Lord, and therefore desires and deserves our obedience. We would never qualify our friendship with others in this way, because we are not superior to one another. But He is superior to us all. **We demonstrate** our love relationship with Christ as we obey His word.

In a similar way we demonstrate our love for one another through **mutual submission**. We are not commanded to obey each other but this is a reminder that love sometimes requires submission to another for a particular reason or season. Love is willing to do so

If I always have to have my way in a friendship there is no love. Love defers, love yields, love sometimes submits.

3. Shared Transparency (15)

Once again Jesus reveals his friendship with them and points out one of the important characteristics of friendships. Transparency. Jesus points out that he has shared with them things the father has revealed.

In other words, He has been open with them. Friends share with one another. If we love each other we will open up to each other. We will be available to each other. We will understand each other. We will rejoice with each other and weep with each other.

Willingness to open up and share yourself. Jesus did that. He exposed Himself to those men. Friend is one who is willing to lower the mask and be real. Great need for that in the church. Become to

accustomed to putting on our church faces, refusing to let anyone know the real us. Let go of the games and be real with each other.

C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves

To love at all is to be venerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or your selfishness. But in that casket--safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable... The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers...of love is Hell.

4. Shared Calling (16)

Chosen by Him

We are not a part of the family of God because we have earned it. We are in his family because he chose us. That word has built into it the idea of purpose. Appointed for a reason. Reminder that Jesus is in charge.

Expected to Bear Fruit

Why did he appoint us? That we might bear fruit. That is the clear teaching of this chapter. Note the additional qualifier Jesus gives for the fruit that we are to bear. It will have a permanent quality to it. How we relate to our fellow believers will impact the fruit we bear. Once more Jesus reminds us that our effectiveness in prayer is directly linked to our relationship with him and with others.

You and I have been given a special gift from God. Gift of brothers and sisters in Christ. Wonderful relationship which the non-believing world will never comprehend. There is a unity among us that is built on our relationship to Christ and is made enjoyable through our love for

one another. Do you love each other? Really love each other. Is it evident in your life?

Our calling and purpose as followers of Christ is

To love God completely,

To love self correctly, and

To love others compassionately.

Takeaways:

Much of what we do to love others happens organically. In other words we show our love in the normal flow of our lives. Unplanned, spontaneous. But to rely on those ways is not enough. For most of us we need some intentional steps to take. So, here you go. I'm got three things that I want to challenge you to do.

1. Make a list of 2-5 five people who need your love.

Not talking about romantic love, but the love of Christian brothers and sisters for one another. You may already be in a close relationship with them, but you need to step up your expressions of love to them. Or the Lord may draw your eyes to someone or some ones in our fellowship who need someone to love them. They need someone to draw them in, to affirm that they matter and are loved. Pray through this. Don't reveal the names to anyone. Keep it between you and God.

2. Make a list of practical ways you can show love to them.

Think through legitimate ways to show Christlike love. Invite them for coffee or to meet for lunch. Sit with them in church and ask how they are doing. Ask how you can pray for them, more than once. Invite them into your circle of friends.

3. Schedule the first act of love toward one or more of them.

Then follow through with your plans for each one on your list.

4. Pray for the love of God to be felt through you.