



**Relationships: The Importance of Being Extremist Lovers of One Another  
How Much Again? It's Measured How? Really?  
John 15:10 – 17**

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Jesus has a captive audience walking along with Him heading towards Gethsemane. They are believers, and they love and follow Jesus, but they are, at this time, a self-centered group more interested in arguments about who will be the greatest than serving each other. No one offered to wash anyone else's feet when Jesus washed theirs. It wasn't shock, it was selfishness.



Peter didn't jump up and say let me; no, he initially rejected allowing Jesus the opportunity to even do so. No one was willing to serve if there wasn't something in it for them. They all failed the growth test Jesus gave them.

I have discovered that each day I walk with Jesus, He still is doing those little growth tests. How do we detect them? When we catch ourselves saying:

- How dare they?
- I would never do that.
- I'm glad "they" decided to do that.
- Too early in the day for me.
- I really do not have to yield right of way to you.
- What's wrong with your driving?
- I could do better.

Unfortunately, I have way too many examples.

We all need to be on the lookout for those little growth tests.

Jesus also tends to test our faith too from time to time. We tell Him "Yes Lord, I will follow you" on whatever it is He has been talking to you about step out and do. For all of us, there is always a next step of faith, and it is indeed different for each of us based on where we are on the growth curve with Jesus.

But He does follow-ups. I will use me as an example here. I have no problem trusting Him in starting a church, He has shown up and He is the one who I am following on this. But do I trust Him to also take care of my WIFI equipment problem too?

We are all self-absorbed and in love with ourselves over anyone else unless we are abiding in Him. In the flesh, none of us would do any better than the performance being turned in by the disciples.

How bad is it for us? Let me ask a question, whenever you see a group or family picture and you're in it, who do you look at first?

When you prepare to leave the house in the morning for work or school, do you look in the mirror to make sure you are presentable? Not everyone does that though, one of my college professors was like that. The man was brilliant and could tell you anything you wanted or didn't want to know about Roman history.

But he left the house without ever looking at himself. He would show up with his hair uncombed, pieces of paper still stuck to his face where he cut himself shaving, his tie, untied. At least his pants were always zipped but shirts tucked in or buttoned up, not always. But brilliant.

For most of us though, we care about how we look. We are a wee bit self-absorbed and want to make sure we are looking good.

Looking good, also means getting the right promotions, being in the right places, meeting the right people, being touted as a somebody. In other words, a good military introduction.

I remember being introduced once at a ceremony and the introduction took almost two full minutes. I began to wonder if I really had done all those things, they said I had. I had no idea I had cured the common cold...just kidding. We all want people to say good and wonderful things about us. But really now, how much of that is truly necessary? What do we all truly want to hear the Lord say more than anything else about us? "Well done good and faithful servant."



The disciples were no different.

At this point, the disciples operated way too much like the way most of the world operates today. I have been involved with giving on a corporate level for a lot of years, and trust me, corporations do not give unless there is something in it for them. Usually, their name being associated with the charity and leveraging that for marketing purposes. Governmental entities are the same way, but they also want a level of control as well.

As believers, we are not to be that way. The disciples are still, at this point, reflecting more of the world than they should. That is all about to change as everything they know is about to be turned upside down.

What was inaugurated by Jesus with His “I Am” statements (John 15:1, 5) was a transitioning of economies, a movement from God ruling the world through the Mosaic code to one in which grace would be the new ruling factor (cf. Rom 6:14). (Marsh 2019, 134-135)

This change is huge.

For the disciples, everything is changing. Literally, everything. What does it really mean to be a friend? They thought they knew the answer to that, but they don't. What does it mean to love God? They thought they had that one wired too, they didn't, not even close.

And then there is this new thing, loving each other. Really? What is that all about anyhow and are you serious? How can we even do that? What can we point to as an example?

Jesus is getting them ready for the cross, the end of the old covenant and the beginning of the new covenant. He is also getting them ready for an entirely new life, a fruitful life, something they have never experienced before.

Everything is about to be made new.

Jesus is not done with revelations yet about how everything changes.

He gave them a strong foot stomping hint back in John 13:34

John 13:34–35

“I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.” (NASB 2020)

Now that He has talked about the imperative nature for believers to actively and continually abide in Christ, we come to realize that that is the only way that real change in our lives ever takes place. Abiding means living in the 24/7 every second is a realization that without Him, we can do nothing, and we absolutely must have Him through the Holy Spirit empowering us in everything that we do every second of every day.

It was curious though about the verb tenses that Jesus chose to use in the Greek here, when He first gave the disciples this new command. Agape, we get that now, unconditional love no matter what, got it. But when Jesus talked about it, He used a verb in the aorist tense implying a completed action. He has not yet been to the cross, but even has He talks to the disciples about how He has loved; He is speaking as if His ultimate act of love has already been accomplished.



For His disciples though, He used the present active voice but the subjunctive mood. Unless you are a grammar wonk, that is, well, Greek to you.

In general, Greek verbs are put into the subjunctive mood to indicate that the action is a conceivable one (in the mind of the speaker) but not an actual occurrence. (Groton 2013, 243)

Or to put it another way, when Jesus says He has loved, He is speaking of the cross as a done deal, but the love of the disciples which He is commanding, is contingent on what we covered last time, abiding in Him. Because of that, when Jesus states the command, He uses the subjunctive mood to present the action of the verb, agape, as probable.

It expresses an action that has not yet been fulfilled but is viewed as potential. Translate it with the auxiliaries may, might, or should. (Bob Jones University Greek Faculty 2007, 72)

Both times here in John 13:34 where Jesus is speaking about disciples loving, it is in the subjunctive.

The way it is translated in the Complete Jewish Bible reflects this.

John 13:34

“I am giving you a new command: that you keep on loving each other. In the same way that I have loved you, you are also to keep on loving each other.” (CJB)

After telling us about the Holy Spirit and the need to abide in Him, Jesus will once again, return to this notion of our loving one another.

It appears this is not optional. Backing up to John 15:10. We read the following.

John 15:10–12

“If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” (NASB 2020)

This new fellowship He is now bringing into being, what we now understand as the church, not born yet, will have different ground rules than how you operated in the past. If we wish to abide in and remain in His love and the Fathers love, we must follow His commandments. Central is this one, which He mentions again, loving one another.

What Jesus is focusing in on here primarily is the need for us as His followers to love one another as He had loved us by His going to the cross on our behalf. That is extremist love. That is rabidly radical love. Jesus is saying to us that we too, must become love extremists, just like Him, as it pertains to our love for one another. It means we are being so extreme in our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ; that we are fanatical about it to the point of also being rabidly radical love revolutionaries. Literally, after our love for Jesus Christ, nothing else should matter more than our love for one another.

How do we do life and demonstrate that we are abiding in the love of Jesus, remaining in His love? “In effect, the fundamental requirement for abiding in Jesus’ love is the mutual love that the disciples must have for one another...The obvious implication is, once again, that, in the eyes of the author, some believers are not “abiding,” i.e., are not carrying out this particular command. Thus, the inner-Christian problem that has erupted in the community has strong ethical connotations as well: the disciples are failing in their love for one another.” (Segovia 1982, 123-124) Yes, we know that.



Jesus knows that as well. His disciples failed the test back earlier with the foot washing. Now, He is taking that failure and putting some context around what He meant when He gave them the new commandment back in John 13.

John 15:12–13

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus knows their hearts; He also knows ours. Peter was the only one who ever vocalized the question when he asked how often he should forgive.

Matthew 18:21–22

“Then Peter approached him and asked, “Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?” “I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven.” (CSB)

Notice the terms, brother, and sister. Peter is talking about fellow believers that had offended him somewhere along the line. He was looking for a license to cease forgiving them and call down judgment from God. Jesus did not provide that license at all and now, here in John 15, He adds the need to love that same brother or sister. How should we love them? Jesus tells us.

What is also implied here is that our brothers and sisters in Christ are our friends. There is more to this new relationship than just unconditional love no matter what and that love to be external evidence of the continual abiding of the believer in the love of Christ.

When Jesus says friend here, it means many things.

The “love between the Father and the Son leads to love between Jesus and the disciples (vv. 9–10), and now his love for us is reflected in our love for one another. This triangular love itself reflects the Trinity. Our relationship with each other grows out of the internal relationship of the three members of the Godhead. All our relationships emerge and draw their energy from our relationship with Christ...We cannot truly know the love of Christ without loving one another. Love cannot be abstract but must be concrete, lived out in daily life.” (Osborne 2018, 361)

But here, Jesus is alluding to the cross and reflects what the definition of love is. There is no love greater than one who willingly lays down their life on behalf of friends. There is no way that my love of His church, of those who He has given or will give in the future to be part of Calvary Chapel, will ever even come close to that example. Jesus loves us, and He knows us, and He still will do this for us.

Paul was not part of this conversation, but he would later learn about it and then write a commentary on what Jesus is saying.

What he says summarizes completely our position before we come to know Jesus.

Romans 5:6–8

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (CSB)

Before Jesus, we are all helplessly enslaved to sin and in need of redemption. We are slaves and Jesus is the one who buys us out of that slavery, He redeems us because of what He achieved on the cross on our behalf. He willingly took the penalty onto Himself for our sin and wrongdoing doing so when we were at our worst.



Just as Jesus spoke of His love being a completed act as He described the new commandment, the new evidentiary exhibit that we are in Him. He also saw past our miserable before Christ state to what we could and would become in Him. He saw us as we would be abiding in Christ and doing mighty acts on His behalf and in His name. This is indeed love.

And “this love of Christ cannot in every sense be a pattern for our love toward one another. As far as its infinite value, substitutionary character, and glorious redemptive consequences are concerned, his act of love, whereby he determined to lay down his life for us, can never be a pattern for our love of the brethren. In these respects that love is completely unique and cannot be copied.” (Hendriksen and Kistemaker 1953-2001, 305)

But what about love of someone who gives up their rights?

This love with legs on it is the kind of love Jesus is talking about here. It is also the kind of love Paul talked about as well in his first letter to the church in Corinth. There was a serious struggle in that church to separate from their previous life as normal everyday idol worshipers. They had come to Christ, and some fully embraced that, others struggled with it and because they were not growing at the same rate as others were, they were still inordinately offended by things which in scheme of things, meant nothing. In Corinth, associated with the pagan temples in town, were meat markets and restaurants. Not everything sacrificed was burned up or eaten.

Overlooking the city of Corinth was their acropolis, a hilltop that had various temples on it. There was Temple to Apollo there as well as Aphrodite, Octavia, and others. These Temples not only had meat markets, but apparently some top chefs too attracting folks from town to come up and catch the view over a dinner previously sacrificed to Apollo.

The church there was still learning about the idea of what loving their brothers and sisters meant. So, what happens if I'm there enjoying a nice steak dinner and you walk by me as I am eating on the patio?

They think Christian conduct is predicated on gnōsis (knowledge) and that knowledge gives them exousia (rights/freedom) to act as they will in this matter. Paul has another view: The content of their knowledge is only partially correct; but more importantly, gnōsis is not the ground of Christian behavior, love is. (Fee 1987, 363)

Paul will provide a practical example of the love, Jesus is talking about here in John 15.

1 Corinthians 8:8–13

“Food, however, will not improve our relations with God; we shall not lose anything if we do not eat, nor shall we gain anything if we do eat. Be careful, however, not to let your freedom of action make those who are weak in the faith fall into sin. Suppose a person whose conscience is weak in this matter sees you, who have so-called “knowledge”, eating in the temple of an idol; will not this encourage him to eat food offered to idols? And so this weak person, your brother for whom Christ died, will perish because of your “knowledge”! And in this way you will be sinning against Christ by sinning against your Christian brothers and sisters and wounding their weak conscience. So then, if food makes my brother or sister sin, I will never eat meat again, so as not to make my brother or sister fall into sin.” (GNB)

Paul is not advocating becoming vegan here, but he is saying that we should be aware of those who are in the fellowship who may not be as far along in their walk as we are. The world has some really funny ideas about how Christians should act and as they come to Christ, those ideas come with those who are now new in the faith.



I grew up in central California. I was a pagan until High School so unlike some of the folks I went to Bible School with, who had been raised in a Christian home, I had very few hang-ups surrounding the common so-called Christian bugaboos of the day such as motion pictures, cards, dancing or rock music and jazz. I was a musician at the time and played in a jazz band. I had taken classes from several jazz greats who passed through town. Dad was a sound engineer and would complain about some of the bands he mixed for television purposes, but they sounded pretty good. Bands like the Who, Iron Butterfly, Jefferson Airplane and others.

So off I go to Bible School, and I thought it was serious cool when a new Christian band, Sweet Comfort Band came and played at chapel one day. It was a bit of a shock when friends of mine called their music Satanic. Really? I learned first-hand what Paul was talking about. Pink Floyd albums in the dorm were a no no for sure after that.

Love means setting aside our rights, in order to love on and not offend that brother or sister who might be offended at what we see is a non-issue, but they still have not grown to that point yet in the Lord.

Let's take another look at verse 13.

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends." (NASB 2020)

In the Gentile world of Greece and Rome, what Jesus is saying here they would fully understand. Because the Greek world highly regarded laying down one's life for another or for one's nation and also recognized its occasional value as "an expiatory sacrifice to assuage the anger of the gods," Greeks or Romans would readily grasp the early Christian concept that Jesus died "on their behalf," with or without the benefit of understanding atonement in the Levitical system. (Keener 2012, 1005)

Jesus has already talked about laying His life down back in John 10 when He was claiming to be the Good Shepherd.

How extreme is our love? Are we willing to give up our rights for a brother or sister who is still struggling? Are we willing to die to self for a while?

How important are those friendships we have with others in the church? We are in the same family after all, do we live like that?

We wouldn't drink wine in front of an uncle who is a recovering alcoholic, what about the brother in Christ who has the same background?

John 15:13–14

"Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you." (NASB 2020)

Now we know what love really means, Jesus adds something that is mind blowing. If we do what He commands us, we are His friends. If we are His friends, then we are the ones He laid His life down for, even though at the time He did it, we were His enemy.

Let's not get this backwards here. Obedience does not make us His friends. Obedience characterizes that we are His friends. We are obedient to Him because we love Him, not to get His love.

We need to understand this. Because we are in Jesus and we love Him and abide in Him, we are enabled to be obedient and actually want to be because of the Holy Spirit in us. Our obedience shows us



to the world that we are His friends. “Neither God nor Jesus is ever referred to in Scripture as the ‘friend’ of anyone. Of course, this does not mean that either God or Jesus is an ‘unfriend’: if one measures friendship strictly on the basis of who loves most, guilty sinners can find no better and truer friend than in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Son whom he has sent.” (Carson 1991, 522)

Jesus tells us that as His friends, we are the object of His love as He went to the cross for us and as His friends, we are obedient to Him.

Being a believer in Jesus Christ is pretty simple. “The Christian life is following His instructions, and the instructions are clear. If you follow these instructions, you will bear fruit. He laid down His life for us; He asks us to obey Him. He is our friend because He died for us. We are His friends when we keep His commandments.” (McGee 1997, 469)

Let me ask this question before we go any further. Are you a friend of Jesus?

If you aren't, I am going to talk a bit in a few minutes about how you can be His friend.

Jesus continues with the change in relationship that this truly means.

John 15:15

“No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus is talking to His disciples; they would immediately know what this means. “The disciples now enjoy a new status as “friends of God,” a concept the Jewish people reserved for the great leaders of the past like Abraham and Moses. The depth of this new friendship is cemented by the fact that “everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” This would never be true for a slave, for he would never be allowed to “know his master’s business.”” (Osborne 2018, 363)

If you are in Christ, you too have the status of “friend of God.”

We have His word, and He has provided us everything we need to be able to know God’s word. If we were still slaves, then we would not be allowed to know the master’s motives and plans. But we have all of that in the pages of the scriptures.

We are not blindly following; we know the motive of the Father is to redeem those who believe to Himself through what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross for us. He wants us to be with Him for all eternity and He has supplied the means for that to happen through the resurrection of Jesus Christ defeating death for all time.

1 Corinthians 2:9

“That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”” (NLT)

He has also revealed His plans for the future and for us and He has also left some of those plans in the to be revealed category. We are His friends, but he is still the sovereign God, the creator of everything. Just as the disciples were not authorized, we too are not authorized to call Him our friend, He is our God, we are His friends.

In the Air Force, I had a friend who was a General, I was not. But I had known him since I was in High School. He would call me and usually start off by saying, “Kenny, how are you doing?”





My response was normally, “just great general, and you.” We were friends, but I was just a Major, he was not, and I never forgot that. He was my “big” boss as he worked at the Pentagon, a place I judicially avoided.

Our relationship with the Lord is similar. We love each other, **we are His friend, He is our God.**

Not that Jesus or God is unfriendly, but each remains a sovereign Lord to be obeyed, not a colleague to be befriended. (Harris 2015, 270)

What comes next is tough to understand in light of the fact we all have free will. When Jesus died on the cross, He died for all sinners, not just those who would accept the offer of salvation.

John 3:16

““For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.” (NASB 2020)

John 15:16–17

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another.” (NASB 2020)

He chose us. That alone is pretty cool. But then you start wondering why didn't He choose so and so too? First, He is God, we aren't. He knows everything, we don't. But free will, yeah there is that too. If God knows everything, what does this mean?

God is omniscient. “An omniscient being can only be capable of knowing what can be known by anyone—contradictions cannot be known, nor can false propositions be known as true, nor can what others' internal sensations feel like to them be known by anyone else, nor can future indexical propositions be known before the future occurs. A divine being who is omniscient knows the informational content of every proposition and every experience that a being with God's attributes can know. Since his attributes are all perfections, they do not likely preclude him from knowing something he should know as the maximally-great being.” (Feinberg 2001, 315)

He chose us, you and me if we know Jesus Christ.

Why?

He chose us to be fruity, we have already talked about that.

He chose us to produce fruit that would remain. But fruit is fungible, it rots. But the fruit He wants us to produce will not rot, it will remain. It will be eternal just as our Lord who is producing it in our life is eternal.

Are we working for Him, or is He working through us?

Finally, He chose us to be interceders.

If we are believers in Jesus, then we are part of this really big family called the church. As we begin to fellowship with others in this family, we find out about those in it and what it going on in their life as well as sharing what is going on in our life. As we love one another, we also become concerned over some of the things taking place in our brothers and sisters and begin to pray for them, their ministries, their health, their well-being. In other words, we become intercessors.



Intercession is praying for others. They are friends of God, so I suspect they are indeed important to Him just as we are important to Him.

We love on them by taking their needs into the throne room and letting the Father know about what it is they need. Jesus promises us that as we do that, “whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give you.”

And there it is again, answered prayer, obedience, and the command to love one another.

John 14:13 – Ask in His name and “this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Ask Me anything in my name, I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

John 15:7–8

“If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” (NASB 2020)

John 15:16–17

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another.” (NASB 2020)

Three times Jesus tells us about answered prayer. Three times and three times He ties it to obedience, abiding, and loving. All of this means we are reflecting in our life the simple fact; we are friends of God.

Are you? You can be.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

### **ABC’s of Salvation**

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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