

Bonus Points
"Uncommon Love"
01/20/2008
John 15:12-17



Our deep desire at Grace Community Church is not only to help people get into the Word of God, but to help get the Word of God into people. But we realize that most people don't have the advantages of a Bible degree, a library full of books, or the freedom to devote many extra hours to study. So we want to help make the Scripture more accessible to you by offering additional commentary, insight, and other suggested resources to enhance your own study of God's Word. Each week we'll offer these tools that will coincide with the passage taught that Sunday. As you spend time in Scripture on your own, we hope this will enhance your study, develop your insight, and build your confidence in handling God's Word well.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15

John 15:12-17

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Command - Jesus in this section refers several times to His commands, to being obedient to what He commands. The single command that He expresses here, though is this one— to love one another. In 13:34, Jesus refers to this as a new command. The reason that it is new is that Jesus is creating a new community—a new reality called the church that would be birthed in a short time after His death and resurrection. The manner in which the church loved one another would be the greatest evidence for the reality of Christ in them and among them. This command is so central to the growth of the Kingdom, the church of Jesus, and our conformity to Christ's likeness, it is the only command that Jesus references.

Love - the word used is agape—unconditional, sacrificial, not rooted in emotions, but not separate from emotions either. A choice, a decision to seek the highest and best of another person without regard to oneself.

13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus describes the highest expression of love possible—self sacrifice on behalf of another. Clearly Jesus is pointing to the next few hours when He would do this very thing. What Jesus commands, He models and exemplifies to the uttermost. He never requires others to do what He would not do Himself in its fullness.

Jesus in this section describes the key to an abiding/intimate connection with Him—obedience—modeled on Jesus' relationship with His Father. The key to relationship with one another—sacrificial love, modeled upon Christ.

14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

As familiar as these words are to us, they were quite radical to those hearing them. They had a rabbi-student relationship, and they were quite accustomed to calling Jesus “Lord,” meaning master. It was not expected or likely that a master would take a slave into his close confidence and inner circle of friendship, but that is precisely what Jesus is describing here. Referring back to Abraham’s relationship with God—Abraham in Scripture is referred to as both a servant of God (Genesis 26:24) and as God’s friend (2 Chronicles 20:7). In Genesis 18, we see God including Abraham in His plans and intentions toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and the dialogue between them as friends about the situation. It’s a remarkable picture of the close kind of relationship that we and the disciples are being invited into.

15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

A servant’s job is to do as they are told and not to ask questions or even know why. Jesus has been disclosing what He is doing, why He is doing it, and allowing them to be part of the shaping of history and redemption. Jesus desires to share with us what “He is doing” in the world, in us, and around us. And He has shared with us freely from His relationship with His Father that we may enter into His life as our life together.

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.

Jesus selected the 12 disciples—including Judas, who would betray Him. Judas has left them, and so the discussion of fruit is pertinent to them all. The kind of fruit—people brought to know Christ, developed in Christ, the internal fruit of the spirit—is eternal. We have been chosen—God is always before us, even when we perceive that it is us taking the initiative. But His purpose is clear—that we would be fruitful—the fruit happens as we remain connected to and obedient to Jesus.

Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

To ask in Jesus name is to ask the kind of things that He would ask. To speak in another’s name is to so align ourselves with them, their will, their heart, that we would be asking and speaking the same kinds of things that would be true of them if they were speaking. So the Father will of course give us what we pray that is aligned with and submissive to and in accordance with the heart of Jesus—just as the Father did for Jesus. To pray in Jesus name is not to simply tack on a phrase at the end of our prayer.

17 This is my command: Love each other.

Again, the central command for His followers is reiterated. When something is repeated in Scripture, it is very important. When it is repeated as often as it is here, it is supreme.

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