

**John 15:12-17**

12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Last week I talked about a double lesson where Jesus teaches a lesson twice for emphasis. In the first lesson we learn that the believer will do the ministry of Jesus and if you love Jesus you will keep his commandments. In the second lesson we learn that those who have the commandments and keep them are the ones who love Jesus and those who love Jesus will keep his word. Jesus puts a condition on love and obedience. He ties them together. Love is the guiding factor. If you love Jesus you will follow his teachings. It is very important to understand this. It is easy to claim to be in the Jesus group. Words are easy. It is easy to have a public confession of faith. It is much harder to practice faith as it is taught by Jesus, especially the commandment to love one another.

Jesus is on a mission to the cross to save us. He goes all over the place preaching, teaching, and healing. He avoids the evil trap of a murder conspiracy until his time comes. He goes to Jerusalem for a specific purpose, he has the last meal with his disciples, he sets up the Holy Communion, and he teaches about love. The doctrine of God, the doctrine of Jesus, the doctrine of Christianity, is a doctrine of love. This is the foundation of our belief. Our belief structure is based on love. What we get from Jesus is a call for action that is based on love. If you are a believer, you will do the ministry of Jesus. If you love Jesus, you will follow his teachings - all of them - even the hardest ones.

Today’s Scripture is the climax of his lesson on love and obedience. It is not just teaching but a commandment. You are commanded to love one another. A commandment is serious. He means business. Love one another is not a suggestion. It is not something you do when feel like it and only if feel like it. You do not get to chose to obey or not obey. This is a commandment from the highest authority. You have to love one another. Notice the stipulation of the commandment. The degree of love that Jesus insists upon is to love one another “as I have loved you.” That is the condition of the commandment - to love others like Jesus loves us. Love others with 100% care and sincere compassion. Love the person that has sinned against you. Love the person that hates you. Love the person that is disrespectful and rude. Love the person that has snubbed you.

We commonly know that we have a friend in Jesus. You and I are on a first name basis with Jesus. But, notice what Jesus says about our relationship as friends. Jesus says “you are my friends if you do what I command you.” You can’t take it for granted. Jesus threw in the “if.” Once the “if” is in, there is nothing you can do. It’s a done deal. It’s a given. You have no choice in the matter. You and Jesus are friends if you do what he taught you. You are a friend of Jesus if you obey what he taught us about loving one another.

Jesus brings the word of God to us. So, what we have here is doctrine. I hope you understand how important our doctrine of faith is. The problem that Jesus encountered with the

religious leaders was that they evolved away from the doctrine of God. They claimed to be with God but practiced their own preferences. Doctrine is the most important thing because the scribes and Pharisees were off track due to doctrine. They abused what God loves most - the people that God created. So, I very strongly emphasize a focus on doctrine to keep us centered on Jesus. When we ask what did Jesus do? And when we ask what did Jesus say? This keeps us centered on Christ. So, we don't get sidetracked by whatever is popular in secular society.

You can tell how important the commandment to love one another is by the way it is framed in the Gospel. Jesus first gave the commandment to love back in verse 13:34 Then he gave the lesson about the believer being the one that does the ministry of Jesus and if you love Jesus you keep his commandments. Then he repeated the lesson that it is those who have the commandments and keeps them are the ones who love him and those who love him will keep his word. He uses different words to say pretty much the same thing in order to drive home the point. Then he repeats new commandment. Then he repeats the new commandment once again. So, the commandment of Jesus to love one another is actually given three times **John 13:34** "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. **John 15:12** "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." **Verse 15:17** "I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another." Jesus drilled it into our heads so that there is no excuse for not getting it and no excuse for not following it.

If you want to ship something that is fragile, you wrap it in bubble wrap or use a bubble envelope. You put that in thick box and fill it with lots of padding. You make sure it is protected by layering the protective padding. The more fragile, or more valuable, an item is then the more protection it gets. Well, Jesus protected the lesson on the commandment to love one another by wrapping it in layers.

I want you to notice a very significant detail. He said "as I have loved you." You really need to get this. Our model to follow is Jesus; the love of Jesus. This is very serious business. It is a matter of real, sincere, unselfish, deep caring love. Jesus commands us to love in a way that is not based on our standards because most Christians tend to go out into the world as if there is no change in us. When Jesus commands us to love it is according to the way he loves us. You are not to be like everyone else in the world. You are to be like Christ.

I'll conclude with a lesson on transformation. When my son was little he had these toys called transformers. You could convert them from a robot to a bug, or a robot to a monster, or a car to a robot, etc. The toys were totally different after they were transformed. The Christian is to be changed like that - a completely different being. Transformed as Christians we are different from mainstream society because we follow in the footsteps of Jesus and obey his commandment to love one another.