

# John 15

## ENGAGE FELLOWSHIP

*“So this is my command: Love each other deeply, as much as I have loved you. For the greatest love of all is a love that sacrifices all. And this great love is demonstrated when a person sacrifices his life for his friends.” (John 15:12-13)*

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**T**he lazy flame of the oil lamps cast more shadows than light as the twelve huddle around the low table. Beneath the open windows the city breathes out life and commerce, the noise carried by a slight breeze that tempers the stale air. You can smell the scents from the street mixing now with the sweat of the men and the simple meal prepared for the Master. They are dirty from the feet up.

Everything has changed. On the walk from Jericho He had been so focused. What was supposed to be triumph when He entered the city turned to tears as He wept over the same. The words He speaks now are distilled down to a profound whisper as they bend in to catch every word. The years of teaching and preaching comes to light in the dim glow of the room. “Love each other as I have loved you,” He says. It is a living command. And it is what separates His church from all others.

Is this really possible? Practical? Doable? Only by first experiencing the kind of love that Jesus demands. *“This is my command.”* It is not a suggestion or an encouragement. It is the marching orders for the followers of Jesus from this final night and going forward to His second return. There is no place on earth that this kind of love is lived out like in the church of Jesus Christ. Whether a church service or small meeting in a home, bonds are formed that example what Jesus commanded. The Body of Christ is knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:16)

- Who has God uniquely bound you to?
- What saint has become a friend closer than a brother?

**Stop and thank God with a partner or small group that you are not alone because of that friend.**

- What grace does your friend express that is a blessing to you?
- Some examples are truth telling, mercy, joy, or encouragement.

**Now follow up by engaging your friend with words like this:**

*“Recently, the Holy Spirit has reminded me of what a gift you have been to my life. I am most grateful that you are \_\_\_\_\_(merciful, joy filled, an encouragement) to me.”*



# John 15

## EXPERIENCE SCRIPTURE

*“I call you my most intimate friends, for I reveal to you everything that I’ve heard from my Father.” (John 15:15)*

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**H**ow deeply intimate and far-reaching is his love! How enduring and inclusive it is! Endless love beyond measurement, beyond academic knowledge—this extravagant love pours into you until you are filled to overflowing with the fullness of God! (Ephesians 3:17-10)

What do best friends share? Everything.

The final evening before the passion would begin, Jesus bared His sinless soul to those who He knew would betray, doubt and run away in fear. John 13:1 begins, Jesus knowing. He who knew no sin also knew the heart of every man. He released Judas to “go and do what you will do quickly.” He told the truth to Peter. “You will deny me three times.” He washed the feet of every disciple, the same feet that would run away to protect themselves.

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 15:15)

It will no doubt seem strange, but friendship with God is foundational to our being a good friend to others. The startling possibility that you and I (the created) can relate closely even intimately with the Creator is hard to grasp, but it’s true. The Bible says that Moses spoke with God as with a friend, and Abraham is referred to as a “friend of God” (Exodus 33:11, James 2:23). In the New Testament, as we encounter the God-Man Jesus, this possibility of friendship seems closer and more possible.

The apostle James reminds us that our “friendship with the world” will hinder our friendship with the Lord (James 4:4). God, in fact is a “jealous” friend, knowing that our friendship with the world will bring pain, while our intimacy with Him brings blessings.

True friendship, which is learned in our relationship with the Lord, brings blessings:

- Friends deeply know one another—He knows you, and you make a priority of knowing Him (Jeremiah 1:5, Philippians 3:8)
- Friends initiate care for one another—He meets needs, speaks with you, stays committed to you (Psalm 37:25, 85:8, 139:3, Philippians 4:19). You listen to what He says, try not to grieve Him, and celebrate His goodness toward you (1 Samuel 3:9, Ps 100:2, Ephesians 4:30).
- Friends vulnerably trust one another—In Scripture, Christ shares His joys, hurts, and hopes (John 15:11, 18, 17:5). You share with Him your joys, hurts and hopes (Jeremiah 33:3, Romans 8:26).

On and on, the Master served His friends. He shared everything with those He chose to love. He chose to love you as well. Will you chose to receive everything from Him? *Pray like this:* “Lord, You have chosen to love me completely! I am so grateful for your great love and now receive it gratefully.” *Jesus I want the kind of relationship with You that You spoke of in Your word. I want You, Jesus, as my closest friend.*”

