

John 15

SPirit EMPOWERED Faith

Day 1

L-3. Experiencing God as He really is through deepened intimacy with Him.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind.’ This is the first and most important command... And the second command is like the first: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ ... All the law and the writings of the prophets depend on these two commands.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

I. Love the Lord Your God... How might this text lead me to better love God? “We love because He first loved us.” (1 Jn 4:19) We can only love with all our “heart, soul, mind, and strength” the REAL God.

A. As you read and reflect on the chapter, how might you describe the “REAL” God as He is seen as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

1. In verse _____ He is seen as _____

2. In verse _____ He is seen as _____

3. In verse _____ the love of Jesus is seen toward _____ as He

4. In verse _____ the love of Jesus is seen toward _____ as He

5. How might the above insights challenge some of your misconceptions of God? “Sadly, I sometimes mistakenly see God as _____.”

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Day 2

W-1. Frequently being led by the Spirit into deeper love for the One who wrote the Word.

B. Since God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8): The REAL God described above wants to relate to you as you described Him above; pause to let Him love you.

1. Father, as you express yourself to me as the God who _____, my heart is moved with _____

2. Father, as you express yourself to me as the God who _____, my heart is moved with _____

C. Jesus is available to love you like we read of His love in this chapter. Pause to express your heart to Him as you see Him in this chapter.

1. Describe how Jesus has loved you in some of the same ways that you read of His love in this chapter: “I have experienced the love of Jesus as He has _____

2. Jesus, as you love me like you loved those in this chapter, my heart is touched with _____

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Day 3

P-5. Ministering His life and love to our nearest ones at home and with family as well as faithful engagement in His Body, the Church.

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Day 4

M-1. Imparting the gospel and one's very life in daily activities and relationships, vocation and community.

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Day 5

L-4. Rejoicing regularly in my identity as "His Beloved."

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind." This is the first and most important command... And the second command is like the first: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' ... All the law and the writings of the prophets depend on these two commands." (Matthew 22:37-40)

II. Love Your Neighbor... How might this text lead me to better love others, both those who follow Jesus and those who don't know Him? "Love one another even as I have loved you." (John 13:34)

Since we have freely received of His love, we are to freely give this same love to others; consider again how you see love portrayed in this chapter.

A. Who among your family or friends might you better love?

1. I could better love _____ especially by _____

B. Notice again how Jesus expressed love by accepting, forgiving or sacrificing? How might Jesus have taken initiative, expressed compassion or offered support? How did Jesus share truth and eternal hope?

1. Who in the traffic patterns of your life might benefit from receiving the blessing of Christ's love through you? (*who*) _____ could benefit from my sharing the love of Jesus by _____

2. Who in your life could benefit from sharing part of your life story of encountering truth and eternal hope? (*who*) _____ could benefit from sharing more about _____

3. Pause now to pray from this person and then yourself as you impart both your life and the gospel.

III. "As you love yourself" your significance, value and worth have been established by your creator through the gift of His Son. How might this text affirm your identity as His "beloved"?

"This is how God showed his love to us: He sent His only Son into the world to give us life through Him." (1 John 4:9)

Celebrate how you have received His love and grace, His forgiveness and new life, His calling and kingdom purpose.

A. Re-read the text as His truth being shared just for you.

1. I'm grateful that I have experienced the blessing of verse _____ as I _____

B. Since He is the same yesterday, today, and forever meditate on you being "in" the story of this chapter; allow Him to love you as you read of His love in the chapter.

1. My heart is touched with gratitude that Jesus _____

John 15

Encounter Jesus

“I am a true sprouting vine, and the farmer who tends the vine is my Father. He cares for the branches connected to me by lifting and propping up the fruitless branches and pruning every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest.” (John 15:1-2)

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M-10

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Lifting...propping up the fruitless...pruning every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest. This is an often misunderstood scripture, except for the One who tends the vine. He knows what to do when a branch is found beaten to the ground after a storm. He lifts it out of the mud and carefully washes the mud from the leaves. Otherwise the branch will die and there will be no fruit.

Next, he intertwines the branch among the stronger vines, propping it up out of the dirt. The few leaves and twigs too damaged he carefully clips away to save the vine. A harvest is then possible. In fact, a harvest is then guaranteed.

Some would have you believe that Jesus comes through the vineyard cutting and slicing away every damaged and muddied branch. If you don't clean up your act, you're cut off at the stem and thrown on the burn pile. But that is not the case. And it is certainly not the character of the Savior that the church has known. There is no fear in His love, because perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18-19).

Which are you? The perfect and healthy trailing vine that runs across the trestle with beauty and grace or the one who has fallen, face down in the mud, needing the help and expertise of the master Gardener?

See Him now. He lifts the fallen. He cleans the wound. He touches the leper and speaks life to the dead. No reason to fear. No reason to hide.

Just tell Him. “Jesus I have fallen. Again. I need Your kind hand of mercy to lift me from this muddy path. Thank you that I have nothing to fear. You intended for me to produce fruit and by Your grace, my life will do just that.”

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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The 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 breaths 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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How 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.”

My Journal

Each of the four gospel are written to a peculiar population. Matthew wrote to the Jewish church and his gospel reflects the first century church that resided in Israel as well as the diaspora that began before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Mark's is the power gospel; short, power driven and fast moving. He was speaking to the rulers of the world, the Romans who controlled everyone except the fledging church that could not be contained. Mark declares that no one on this earth is more powerful than Jesus. Luke's influence was far more reaching. His gospel as wells as Acts were written to everyman, declaring Jesus as the Savior of the Jewish and Gentile world alike.

Enter John's gospel that transcends population and captures the heart of God for His creation. John wrote to the soul of mankind, a soul left adrift from the Garden forward whose tattered sail was none the less filled with the sovereign breath of the Spirit that guided all of prophecy to a Bethlehem cave. But again, John appealed to the soul of mankind that longed for home. Instead of facts, he tells of the passionate love of God. He entered into the very world he created, yet the world was unaware. He came to the very people he created– to those who should have recognized him, but they did not receive him. But those who embraced him, and took hold of his name were given the authority to become who they really were– The children of God! (John 1:10-12)

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