

Love Changes People

John 15:9-17: 9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 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. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

Intro: The closing ceremonies of the Olympics featured “Imagine,” John Lennon’s most famous contribution to the world of music. John Lennon is quoted as saying, “I really thought love would save us all,” as if it was a failed idea. He was assassinated at age 47.

Being loved by another changes you. Loving another also changes you. In both cases the change is positive development of your moral and spiritual life.

No doubt should remain in your heart or your head that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has called us to a life of love. His command is clear: love each other (v12, 17). He repeats this command so that we will hear it, learn it, and internalize it.

The love of Christ—receiving and believing it—has an effect on us. We call this the Care Effect around here. I want to describe for you the care effect.

I. Love Holds Us: “Now remain in my love” (v9).

A. There are some places where you want to just settle down and stay. Love is one of those places.

1. The call to remain must be accompanied by some compelling force, and it is. People tend to wander.

Love is the force that holds us close.

2. Love introduces a new era for us. These disciples know that nothing will ever be the same since they have found the love of Christ. “Now” is Jesus announcing that this new era was intended to usher in a permanent change in their lives.

B. Love makes you want to stabilize your life.

C. The One who loves us steadies us. Not all loves are so powerful. This is the special love of God in Christ. We are to remain in HIS love—“my love.”

II. Love Pulls Us: “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love” (v10).

A. Love is a place to remain, but it is not a place where you remain the same as you have always been. Love pulls us toward an ideal in the mind and heart of the Lover.

1. We use this language a lot in our romantic love, love between persons. We talk about how we are better people because we love one another.

2. We want to know what our loved one is thinking. It matters to us, their inner life. If we can, we want to conform to the ideal that is in their heart.

B. God’s love both keeps us and transforms us. We are kept by his love and drawn by his love.

1. Obedience flows out of confidence in the Father’s goodness toward us.

2. We obey because we want to be conformed to His image. We want to become all He intends for us to be.

C. The highest motivation for obedience is love. When we obey God because we love him, then our hearts are set at rest in his presence and we are giving our obedience in the spirit of his love.

III. Love Delights Us: “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (v11).

A. Jesus was full of joy. More than once the gospel writers report his joy. I think that he laughed quickly and easily and that his smile was unforced, natural, and quick. He was delighted with life because he was centered in the Father.

B. Jesus introduces joy as the goal of love and obedience: “so that.” Jesus is concerned about our joy. This is a little bit of a surprise in the midst of it. Some of his followers might say, “What’s happiness got to do with it?”

We might even be a little gruff when we say it. We are not that interested in what makes us feel good. We believe that our obedience, whether we like it or not, is more important than how we feel about it. And it is.

C. But joy draws people to us and to the Savior. We all want to be around people who are happy, content, and satisfied. Joy is important in our evangelism, our presentation of the gospel, particularly among those who know us best. If you are full of joy, people will follow you just to find out where you are going. People are looking for happiness, and seeing it in someone else is interesting, challenging, intriguing, surprising, and compelling.

IV. Love Floors Us: “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (v13).

V. Love Fulfills Us: “I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (v15).

A. “I am a friend of God...” That joyful song says it for me. We are no longer servants but friends. Abraham was God’s friend. It was the revelation that changed his life—that God wanted to be his friend.

B. You have a friend that sticks closer than a brother. His name is Jesus. He loves you.

C. This love comes with great purpose and fulfillment. To be loved of God is to discover who you are in the world. It is to set your course, to find the Plan.

D. Love received has this effect. And love passed on has this same effect. If you will open the love gates in your heart and pour love out to those in need around you, you will live your life at a higher level. You will not be wasting the precious time you have here. You will be on a mission. You will have purpose—to love!

VI. Love Appoints Us: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (v16).

A. We are the chosen people of God. The wonder of being chosen by God—it is beyond explanation.

B. Being chosen is both an act of grace and a tremendous challenge to our hearts. In the very process of being chosen we are also appointed.

C. Our appointment comes in knowing that God has cast his eye upon us, put his hand on our shoulder, and placed his call on our hearts.

D. We are appointed to be fruitful. Our fruit will not be temporary or transient. It will remain. Just as we remain in the love of Christ, so the fruit of our appointment in love remains.

***I lost my declaration of independence in Philadelphia not far from independence hall just like Nicolas Cage. It was printed on the property once belonging to Ben Franklin with lead typeset and a wooden press.

***Golfball in the middle of the snake skin under the barn.

***Janet and I actually picked fake bills out of a lineup with some success at the Federal Reserve Bank. God knows idolatry.

***The US Mint in Philadelphia makes millions of dollars’ worth of coins. These coins enter the presses as metal slugs no more valuable than doubloons thrown from a float. But then they are minted. The images of the state are pressed into them, and those slugs become money, legal tender for purchasing items in these United States.