

### Love One Another

#### John 15:12-17

John 15:12-17 - "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 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. 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another."

#### Background Notes

John 13-17 is known as the Upper Room Discourses, or the Farewell Discourses of our Lord. These teachings were spoken to the disciples on the occasion of the Last Supper, after Judas had left the upper room. The second half of chapter 13 and chapter 14 are one farewell address; chapter 15-16 are a second farewell address; John 17 is the Lord's High Priestly prayer. In view of John 14:31, which says, "*Arise, let us go from here,*" this second discourse (ch15-16) may have been given as they left the upper room and were making their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. On the other hand, they may have lingered on a little longer in the upper room.

In verse 16 the Lord said to them, "*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you...*" In 1st century Judaism, the disciple normally chose one particular rabbi (teacher) from whom he wanted to learn, and to whom he would attach himself. It was just the opposite in the case of our Lord and His disciples, however - the Rabbi chose the disciples. "*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you...*" The Lord handpicked each of His disciples.

One more background note from verse 16: "*I chose you and appointed you...*" Some Bible translations use the word "*ordained*" in this verse. There is no idea here of "ordination" of certain Christians to the ministry by a church or denomination. The idea here is that the Lord has "chosen and appointed" every Christian to bear fruit.

#### Doctrinal/Teaching Points

##### 1. The Lord's command to every believer is emphatic.

The Lord's command that believers should love one another is very emphatic! *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you* (v12). And, *These things I command you, that you love one another* (v17). To love one another is not only a command - it is an **emphatic** command.

It is not an option. It is a command, and it is a clear and explicit command. And the Lord had given this command once before, back in John 13:34, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

Here's an illustration. Let's say that the parents of teens are going out of town for the weekend, and the teens will have the run of the house for the weekend. (I see some smiles!) Now before the parents leave, they try to communicate some directions: Don't forget to feed the pets. Don't forget to water the plants. Don't forget to turn off unused lights. No parties. Try not to break anything. Etc., etc., etc. But there is always one command for any family that is emphasized before the parents leave: "Don't fight!" And the parents will say it more than once! "Remember, no fighting!!"

Well, the Lord Jesus knew that His followers would tend to argue and fight after He left this earth. Like immature children, we would find fault with each other. We would be jealous of one another, and quarrel with one another, and contend with one another! So He left us with this emphatic command, and He repeated it more than once: *"Love one another..."*

**Remember! "Love one another!"**

How much are we to love one another? The Lord tells us, right there in verses 12-13: *"...love one another as I have loved you...there is no greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends"* (emphasis added).

That is the standard. We are to love one another to the point of being willing to die for a fellow believer! That's the kind of love that the Lord had bestowed on us. In Romans 5:8 we read, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

The Lord's command is to *"love one another as I have loved you."* How well do we measure up to that standard? The Lord's command to believers is very emphatic.

## **2. The Lord's call for every believer is endearing.**

*"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"* (v15).

The Greek word used here for "servant" is *doulos*, and it means "slave." The Lord's designation for believers is not "slaves," or even "servants" – it's "friends"! **Friends** – that's a very endearing term!

There is no contradiction here with the New Testament epistles, where we are encouraged to view ourselves as the "bond-slaves" of Jesus Christ. (Look at Romans 1:1 in this connection.) We are "slaves" of Christ in that He alone is our Master, and we should gladly give Him willing, humble and obedient service.

But the point in John 15:15 is that we are **more** than servants, or slaves. We are His **friends**! If we are obedient servants (v14), then we are more than servants - we are friends. Masters don't share their plans with their slaves, but they share plans and secrets with their friends!

Our relationship with Jesus Christ is much more than that of a slave-master relationship. There is an intimate relationship here. We are dear to Him! He shares His plans with us, as we see in verse 15.

Ephesians 1:9 says, *“having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself...”* Think of it – because we are friends of Christ, we are even given insight into the very counsels of God! What a place of endearment! The Lord’s call for believers is very endearing.

### 3. The Lord's choice of believer is encouraging

*“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you...”* (v16). Now the point of the Lord’s “choosing” here in verse 16 is not as much choosing for salvation as it is choosing for sanctification and service. *“I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.”*

What kind of fruit are we to produce? First of all, we should produce the fruit of the Spirit! That involves the process of sanctification. The “fruit of the Spirit” should increasingly characterize our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). And, of course, we should produce the fruit of evangelism. Winning and discipling others for Jesus Christ - that’s Christian service. So the intent of the Lord’s choosing us to bear fruit is both our sanctification and our service. And that should be very encouraging.

The Lord chose us and appointed us to bear fruit, and if we’re true believers, **we will bear fruit**. That’s encouraging! It is particularly encouraging when you feel like you’re not getting anywhere in your Christian life, or there doesn’t seem to be much fruit in your life or ministry. The Lord doesn’t choose us and appoint us to bear fruit, and then not accomplish His purposes! *“...He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 1:6).

Another encouraging point here is that the phrase, *“..and that your fruit should remain...”* That is, our fruit will have eternal value! The fruit that we bear here on this earth doesn’t have a limited shelf life - it is preserved forever! Now that’s really encouraging!

While the primary point of verse 16 is that we’re *“chosen and appointed for fruit-bearing,”* salvation is certainly included. After all, how can you be chosen and appointed for fruit-bearing without being chosen for salvation? *“You did not choose me, but I chose you.”* The concept of “election” has always been disturbing to some Christians, but it should be encouraging. That concept has always been encouraging to me, because I know that if God didn’t make the first move, I would never have chosen God on my own. The Lord’s choice of believers is very encouraging!

## Practical Applications

### 1. DON'T pray for what is not promised!

Look at the end of verse 16: "...that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." But before you take this verse as a promise that you'll get whatever you ask for, notice the context! The context of this verse is fruit-bearing. **This promise is contingent on fruit-bearing!**

This verse is not like a blank check - you pray for whatever you want, and the Lord will sign the check for you! This verse is not a promise that your prayer for an "A" on your next exam will be answered. This verse is not a promise that your prayer for good weather for your beach vacation will be answered. This is not a promise that your prayer for a pay raise in your job will be answered. But it is a promise that if you are bearing fruit, then your prayer request about fruit-bearing, that is made in the will of the Lord, **will** be answered.

Many of you know that I have prayed that, if it's the Lord's will, He will give me enough years with clarity of mind to finish recording through the entire Bible for "Talks for Growing Christians" for our radio and internet ministry. At the present rate, it's going to take a number of years, but I believe that God will answer this prayer! If not, He will give me insight as to His better plan.

In any case, pray for what is promised, and don't pray for what is not promised!

### 2. DO know 1 John 3:16!

You may be saying to yourself, "Everyone knows John 3:16! It's even held up on signs at football games!" Ahhh, but I didn't say John 3:16 - I said **FIRST** John 3:16! 1 John 3:16 says, "*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*"

Remember our first doctrinal point? The Lord's command to believers is very emphatic – "*Love one another, as I have loved you.*" Well here it is again, in 1 John 3:16, "*And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*"

Although at some point we may literally be called upon to lay down our physical lives for fellow believers, we can lay down our lives in many other ways as well. We can lay down our lives by taking time out of our busy schedules to listen to a fellow believer who has a problem, and really needs to talk. We can lay down our lives by giving up our own spare time to help a fellow believer who is ill, or who needs help with home repairs, or child care, some other need. We can lay down our lives by helping to finance a fellow believer to whom the Lord has given a valuable ministry.

We all know John 3:16, that wonderful gospel text: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" But do we know 1 John 3:16?

**DO know – and live out – FIRST John 3:16!**