

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command.” John 15:13-14

Relevant Studies—“24!” (Hours Before the Cross)

Lesson Seven—What a Friend We Have In Jesus

This week, we are continuing our study in Chapter 15 of the Gospel of John. While Jesus was on earth, He did not gather an elite group of business men, or wealthy influential men to be His followers. Instead, He placed Himself in the company of close friends. If Jesus needed friends, then it is safe to say that we also need friends. Close relationships are a good thing! In this passage, Jesus shows us what friendship with Him is really like. There is joy and pain, comfort and cost. Isn't that true with all real friendships? There is no other friendship as important to us as our friendship with Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us to remain in that friendship (in His love).

Day One—Friendship With Jesus Includes Obedience

1. Please read John 15:9-17.
 - a. Look closely at verse 9. How does Jesus love us and what does this mean to you personally?

 - b. Jesus admonishes us (actually commands us) to remain in His love. How do we remain in His love, and why do some people not remain in His love?

2. Read the following verses and explain what they are saying to you and me regarding “remaining” in His love:
 - a. John 8:31

- b. Acts 14:22
 - c. Colossians 1:23
 - d. 1 Timothy 4:15-16
 - e. 1 Corinthians 15:58. (This is my personal life-verse. As you read it, insert your name in it—i.e. “Therefore my dear _____, stand firm....”)
3. We have been commanded to remain in the love of Christ, or to “continue in My love” (meaning to persist or endure). This is possible only if we walk in obedience to the Word of God. What is the result of continuing in His love (verse 11)?
4. Read James 4:4-5 and explain what James is saying regarding friendship with God vs. friendship with the world.

Day Two—Loving People is a Command!

- 1. Loving Jesus is one thing, but how can Jesus command us to love one another? Can this kind of love be commanded? Explain your thoughts.
- 2. When it comes to loving people (especially difficult people), if you think of the word “remain” or “continue” to mean endure or persist—is this more clarifying? Read Matthew 5:43-48, and answer the following questions.
 - a. How do you typically act toward a person who cuts you off in traffic and then gives you a dirty look or an offensive gesture? How can you “love” that person? Doesn’t it just ruin your whole day? He is your enemy, right? What is Jesus saying here (about this very trivial thing)?

- b. It may be easy to love someone who loves you isn't it? Even when they fail us we still love them and they know it. But what reward is there in that? Even the worst criminal (usually) does this. Jesus goes on to say at the end of this passage, *“Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* What does He mean by that? How can we be perfect like God our Father is perfect?
3. Share a time when you know you loved someone very unlovely with the love of Christ (when it was strictly a matter of will).
4. Think about the person you dislike most in your life (whether past or present), and discuss how it would be possible for you to love him or her.

Day Three—Lay Down Your Life For a Friend

The word “friend” comes from the Greek word *philos* which usually refers to a very close friend such as a best man or maid of honor at a wedding. It is an inner circle of friends or even refers to a VBF, or BFF (Very Best Friend OR Best Friend Forever or even VBFF). Sorry, texting is another language.

1. Read John 15:13. How can you (in a practical way) lay down your life for a friend? (Answer this by giving an actual life-example.)
2. Jesus showed His friendship to His disciples and to you and me throughout His ministry, and we are to learn from His example. Of course His ultimate gift was our redemption through His death and resurrection, but what about practical things that **we** can do for **our** friends? The Scriptures below are examples of the love of Christ that we can learn from God's Word. As you read these passages, think of some examples of when you did act as a friend and/or an example, when by your inaction you implied, “Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed”, but did nothing about his/her physical needs.

- a. 2 Samuel 23:15-17
- b. Matthew 25:35-40
- c. Luke 10:30-37
- d. James 2:14-26

Days Four and Five—Chosen and Appointed

The King of kings and the Lord of lords asks you to be His friend! What better friend could we ever want or hope for? We tend to take this for granted, but the fact that He chose us is incredible.

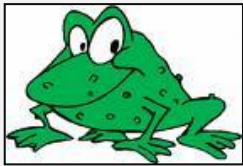
1. Read John 15:16-17. What does it do to your heart to realize that Jesus chose you to be His friend rather than you choosing Him?
2. Does this mean that Jesus does not choose others to be His friend (2 Peter 3:9)?

Jesus not only chose us, He appointed us to go and bear fruit (lasting fruit or eternal fruit). Remember in Lesson Six, we learned that the fruit we are to bear is the fruit of the Spirit? The fruit of the Spirit is meant to be shared! We are not to keep the *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* to ourselves! Appointed means we have been set apart for special service. Each of us has been created uniquely—born with different gifts, talents, and into specific circumstances—and the way in which we “share” our “fruit” or how we are set apart for special service depends much on these. Think about how you are best able to “share” your fruit. Are you a helper, a leader, an encourager? Do you enjoy cooking, baking, or handcrafts and do you share those lovingly with others? Are you set apart to work with children, the elderly, or the homeless? Do you have a knack for making someone feel comfortable and welcome in new situations? Has God given you a difficult life experience that makes you compassionate and nurturing towards others who are experiencing the same things? Knowing exactly what your appointment is isn’t as important as being willing to bear good fruit that will last.

3. After reading the gray box, spend some time in thought and prayer. Write down what you think your appointment may be using the back of this page if necessary.

4. Read Matthew 7:15-23. Explain what this passage means in light of bearing fruit that will last (Jesus words from the Sermon on the Mount).

5. **Optional. The “One Another” of Friendships.** There are so many “one another” verses in the Bible that have to do with how we show our love and friendship to others. I am going to list most of them—look up as many as you like to find the different “one another” admonishments. You may have a concordance (even in the back of your Bible) that lists more or all of them. How many of these “one another” admonishments do you feel like you keep in relating to your friends? Explain. John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10, 16, Romans 15:7; 15:14; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:2; 32; 5:19; 21; Colossians 3:16; 1 Peter 4:9. (List these on the back.)



Once upon a time a handsome prince was changed into an ugly frog by a wicked witch who had cast a spell on him. The only way he could be changed back into a prince was to receive a kiss from a beautiful maiden. (Yuk! Who kisses frogs?) So the prince went unloved for a long time. Then one day it happened! A lovely young maiden picked up that ugly frog and kissed it...and *Shazaam!!!* There was the handsome (and multi-billionaire prince). They lived happily ever after among the rich and famous. Moral: We Christians are going to need to kiss a whole lot of frogs... but who knows what might happen! Also, don't be surprised if you find a lot of frogs kissing you!