

## John 15:9–17 “Christian Love”

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**Intro:** After surgery on my finger, my doctor arranged for me to see a physical therapist. When I looked at the medical order he gave me for therapy, I thought to myself, “I don’t really need to do that. I can handle the recovery myself.” Wrong! The folks at the surgeon’s office almost had a cow when they found out I hadn’t been going to therapy. When I saw the order for therapy, I thought it unnecessary. But I was wrong. Some things that are really important don’t always appear important the first time we see them. That’s the way many of us seem to think about Jesus’ command to love other Christians. We know we ought to, but sometimes it just gets lost in the cracks of daily living. But as we’ll see tonight, loving other Christians isn’t a nice option; it’s central to God’s purpose on planet earth.

**Proposition:** Christ commands us to abide in His love for us, by abidingly loving other believers.

Our study tonight will simply be a working through each verse to discover how to abide in Christ’s love for us and what it means to love one another.

(v.9) Abide in My Love – Jesus began discussing the greatness of His love for us in verse nine, which we studied last Sunday: **John 15:9 - 9** *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.* Since we’ve already looked at this verse, we need not take a great deal of time to discuss it again tonight beyond pointing out the amazing fact it reveals: *Jesus loves us the same way that His Father loves Him – without reservation.* Nothing can possibly separate us from the love Jesus has for us (cf. Romans 8:35-39). The logical question that follows our understanding of this principle is, “How? How do we abide in your love?”

(v.10) How to Abide – Jesus gave us the answer to that question in **John 15:10 - 10** *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.* Again, we covered this last week, so we need not tarry here. The secret to abiding in Christ’s love is obedience. When we do as He commands, we are remaining in, or abiding in, His love. We stay in intimate union with the Savior, in other words. But there is a logical question that flows from this principle as well: “What is Your commandment? What commandments are we supposed to be obeying because of our union with You?”

(v.12) Love One Another – In this verse Jesus gives us the commandment He is anxious for us to obey. **John 15:12 - 12** *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* This is a central teaching of Christ for believers as we will discover tonight. Jesus commands that we love one another (our Christian brothers and sisters, in other words), in the same way that He has loved us. Let’s unpack this.

- The object of this love – Our fellow believers in Jesus. This makes sense because of our union with Christ. By the Spirit’s indwelling presence, you and I have been united with

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Christ – we are “in Christ.” Is it just “Jesus and me” then? Not at all. Once we are united with Christ we discover that the room is full of others who are likewise united with Christ. In fact, there is a whole Church (big “C”) of others who are also united with Christ. Our union in Christ concurrently puts us in union with all others who have put their faith in Him. We are one in Christ with all believers everywhere. Listen to **Ephesians 4:4–6** - **4** *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—* **5** *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* **6** *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* What an amazing fact! But what about those who have not put their faith in Christ? Are we allowed to treat them like dirt? Not at all! The call is for us to love them too, for we never know who belongs to Him, or might yet come to faith in Him. So there is no escaping our responsibility: We are called to abide in His love for us by loving others.

- The type of this love – The second thing Christ tells us in this verse is that the type of love we are to display toward others is the same kind He has displayed toward us: *Jesus loves us the same way that His Father loves Him – without reservation, so we are to love our fellow Christians without reservation.* Of course, this raises another question: What does this kind of love look like?

(v.13) It is Self-sacrificial – Jesus pointed to His example of this kind of love as prototypical: **John 15:13** - **13** *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

Doubtless, Jesus was thinking of the cross He faced the coming morning when He spoke these words. On the cross, Jesus displayed the love of God for fallen humanity in the most graphic, selfless way. He did not cling to His equality with God, but **Philippians 2:6–8** - **6** *though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* **7** *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* **8** *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Jesus laid aside His prerogatives – His self-importance, His possessions, His powers, His pleasures – sacrificing all He had for our sake. And now He calls you and me to take this same attitude toward others, especially other brothers and sisters in Christ. “Servanthood” is the word that best describes our calling.

(vv.14-15) It is Knowledgeable – “Servanthood” is the word that best describes our calling. But does that mean that we are just servants, or does Jesus see us as something more? Something much more according to **John 15:14–15** - **14** *You are my friends if you do what I command you.* **15** *No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.* Jesus tells us two things in these verses. First of all, our obedience to His commandment to love marks us as truly His followers. The identifying mark of the Christian is love for other

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Christians as He told us previously in **John 13:35 - 35** *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” Secondly, Jesus tells us that to Him we are more than mere servants because of our love for Him displayed through our obedience. We have now become His “friends.” What is the difference between a “servant” and a “friend”? After all, servants obey their master’s commands. Are we merely “bondservants,” slaves in Jesus eyes then? Not at all. He has called us friends, and the difference between a servant and a friend is knowledge, as He tells us in verse 15. We are now partners with Him in the endeavor! Collaborators with Him in the great work of redemption God is working out for His glory on planet earth. So, this kind of love is self-sacrificial and knowledgeable. Anything else?

(v.16) It is Purposeful – As believers we have an appointment to keep! **John 15:16 - 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 abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.* Jesus again points us back to His purpose for us: fruit bearing to the praise of God’s glory. I don’t suppose we are meant to read verse 16 of this chapter without reminding ourselves of **Ephesians 1:3–11 - 3** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.* Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, this passage from Ephesians opens us up to the riches of Christ’s brief statement here in John 15:16 of these same truths: We have been chosen by the Father to be put in Christ for the purpose of bringing Him glory through the lavish expenditure of His love on our behalf. Is this all, then? No, there is one more point: This kind of love is not only Self-sacrificial, Knowledgeable, and Purposeful; it is also Central.

(v.17) It is Central – Far from being a peripheral matter, our living out this love for our fellow believers is a main event in Jesus’ purpose: **John 15:17 - 17** *These things I command you, so that you will love one another.* Notice how this sentence bookends this section of Jesus’ discourse with verse 12: **John 15:12 - 12** *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. John 15:17 - 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.* Jesus closed this section of His discourse by emphasizing the central nature of His

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commandment. It's as if He was saying, "Don't miss this! Everything I've been telling you has been for this purpose. Whatever you do, make sure that you are loving one another until I return!" If you doubt that this is what Jesus was saying, listen to His further words about this in **John 17:20–23** - **20** *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.* What a sobering appendix to Jesus' teaching on Christian love! The late, Francis Shaeffer, pointed out that in these verses Jesus gave the world a startling right: The world has a right to judge whether His message is true or not by looking at how believers love each other. Shaeffer called this, "the final apologetic," the last persuasive argument about the truth of the gospel. The answer the world gives may be wrong; but Jesus has given the world the right to come to that conclusion based on what it sees in our treatment of one another. Loving one another is central to Jesus' purposes.

[APPLICATION] So what? What can we take away from these verses?

We always imitate who we admire. Children will imitate a beloved parent. Workers will imitate an admired colleague. Whatever our heroes are known for, by a secret law of human nature, we tend to adopt in our own lives. The great thing to learn here is that God the Father loves Jesus the Son without reservation, and that Jesus the Son, loves His people without reservation. When this fact grips our heart, captures our mind, we will find ourselves loving one another without reservation. But not until we are gripped by this truth will we find this occurring. Trying to force ourselves to love others is just another form of legalistic righteousness. But when we begin asking Jesus to open our eyes to these truths, we take the first step on the road to Christlikeness.

**Conclusion:** Have you taken that step?