

Session 4

March 27, 2022

A LIFE OF LOVE

John 15:9-17

At the end of John 14, Jesus and His disciples departed from the Upper Room and were likely walking the pathway toward Gethsemane (see John 14:31). Having encouraged them about His departure and promised return, He turned His attention to their responsibilities in the meantime. Perhaps prompted by the overhanging vines along the way, Jesus spoke to them using the metaphor of the vine and the branches. The central theme of these verses is that of *remaining*, and that idea permeated His instructions to the disciples.

Eleven times in this chapter, Jesus used the word *remain*. The word itself means to *abide, stay with, wait for, or wait in*. Whether in the past tense, present, or future (all of which occur in these verses), the idea is one of continuation in the state of abiding. In other words, “Keep on abiding!”

Love and joy (vv. 9-11). Jesus points out several principles related to love. First, Jesus was their example in *love*. As the Father loved Him, so Jesus loved them (v. 9). Second, Jesus was their example in *obedience*. As He kept His Father’s commands, so they should keep Christ’s (v. 11). Third, He was their example in *remaining*. As He remained in His Father’s love, so they should remain in His. (vv. 10-11). Notice the vital connection between remaining in obedience and remaining in love. In fact, the only way to continue in His love, is to continue in obedience! At first glance, this seems like a burden. The only way to remain in His love is by obeying His commands? Does that not make His love conditional? Something that has to be earned? That paradox is cleared up in verse 11: The Lord took great joy in obeying the Father and in having His children obey Him. And the Lord’s desire was that His followers would understand the good that came from obeying God, including the fullness of joy that He experienced. This was not to be burdensome but liberating! For reflection: *Why do you think we tend to equate obedience with burden? In what ways can obeying Christ actually remove burdens?*

Love and sacrifice (vv. 12-14). Verse 12 both continues and summarizes what Jesus said just before. Love has always been the central command of God. Jesus pointed that out when cornered by the Pharisees in Matthew 22:36 ff. But here, Jesus makes the commandment much more personal. It is *His* commandment. And it is His commandment to *them*. And again, Jesus serves as their example. Notice the characteristics of the love He is advocating: it is a *selfless* love (v. 12); it is a *sacrificial* love (v. 13); and it is a *serving* love (v. 14). For reflection: *How do these characteristics show up in Ephesians 5:22-32? What are the implications of that?*

Love and fruit (vv. 15-17). In these verses, Jesus expands from the imagery of the vine to other vine-associated word pictures. *Servants* (v. 15) were kept busy grooming vines for the *vinedresser* (15:1) and *fruit* was the result of all the combined labor (v. 16). Note the declarative statements Jesus made regarding *His* role in all this, and the explanations He offered for each. “I called you friends...” (v. 15). Whereas servants are kept at a distance from their masters’ affairs, friends are included. This implies *community*. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (v. 16). This implies *sovereignty* (see also 1 John 4:19). “I appointed you...” (v. 16), for the purpose of bearing fruit that remains. This implies *productivity*. “I command you...” (v. 17), to “love one another.” This implies *intimacy*. For reflection: *Notice the connection Jesus makes between*

bearing fruit and getting our prayers answered (v. 16). What is that connection? Why do you think Jesus mentioned it in this context?