**Livin’ the Life**

**Life on the Vine**

**John 15:9-17**

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David Taylor

We are in our series in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises us. Today we are looking at 15:9-17, I think John 15 is at the heart of John’s gospel, describing how the disciples follow Jesus after his death. It gets to the heart of the spiritual life. Matt Early preached on the metaphor two weeks ago (1-8) God the Father is the gardener; the vine is Jesus and genuine disciples are the branches.

**Jesus’ Love for His Disciples (15:9-11).** Jesus compares the Father’s love for him with his love for his disciples. As Jesus is loved by the Father so too the disciples are loved by Jesus (9). The Father has both loved and enjoyed the Son for eternity (Jn 1:1-2) because God is love (1 Jn 4:8).[[1]](#footnote-1) This is the same kind of love Jesus has for his disciples. Let that sink in. Jesus’ love is unique and distinct from God’s love for the world (3:16). God’s love for the world is a redeeming love, he sent Jesus as a means to reconcile humanity to himself. But his love toward his people is a covenantal or parental love.

But Jesus’ love comes with responsibility, disciples must abide in Jesus’ love by keeping his commandments (10). As Jesus abides in the Father’s love by obedience so too Jesus’ disciples abide in his love by obedience. Note carefully, Jesus does not say that he loves us because of our obedience. The Father has always loved the Son and Jesus gladly and joyfully submitted to his Father because he loves the Father (14:30-31). Jesus did not obey the Father to earn the Father’s love but because he loved the Father. A disciple’s obedience demonstrates genuine faith (8:29-32). We are saved by faith alone but genuine faith is never alone, it produces obedience (Jn 15:8; Mat 7:15-23; Rom 1:5)*.* And the obedience Jesus demands is not drudgery because joy is found in obeying Jesus (11). As Jesus found joy obeying his Father so too the disciples find joy obeying the Son. It is like the joy the psalmist experienced when he delighted in the law of the Lord (1:2), the joy of wholehearted obedience. Notice Jesus says, these things I have said so that my joy may be in you and your joy be full (11). Jesus delighted to do the Father’s will. He found joy in pleasing the Father and when we obey him Jesus shares his joy with us, specifically the joy Jesus enjoyed in the Father.

**Jesus’ Love is to be Imitated (12-15)**

Jesus calls us to follow his example, to love one another. Notice the change from the plural, my commandments (10), to the singular, my commandment. Jesus’ commandments can be summarized in one commandment, the new commandment, as I have loved you, you are to love one another (13:34-35). Our standard for love is Jesus himself, his sacrificial love, laying down his life for his friends (13).[[2]](#footnote-2) Following Jesus means becoming a part of the community of disciples, the church. But Jesus is not calling them to love every single person equally, he is calling the eleven to sacrificially love one another. Loving one another as Jesus intends requires us to be connected in community. Being connected in community requires more than showing up to our Sunday morning services. Our Sunday services are designed to experience God’s presence in worshipping together, to hear God’s voice together through the preaching of the word, and identify with CCC as your church family. But you are not going to get connected in community by attending Sunday services. The way to get connected in community is by participating in a life group. Life groups are where you can develop meaningful friendships, family like relationships, care for one another, share life together, and even pastor one another. If you do not get connected in community you probably will not stay at CCC long term. People go to church for all kinds of reasons but they stay because they are connected in community. If you are not in a life group, then you really cannot fulfill this command in the way Jesus meant because you are not connected with others. You may not want to be that close to people. Maybe you think your fine with just yourself and your dog. That is called individualism and is not a Christian virtue. Individualism is evidence of sinfulness and brokenness. Maybe you have a difficult time with people so you avoid close relationships but Scripture tells us that you need people to grow spiritually and to heal relationally. Many of our sins are relational sins (Gal 5:19-21). It is easy to get along with everyone until we get to know someone. Here is the other reality. It is impossible for me to pastor everyone, to care for everyone, or to love everyone equally. If that is your expectation, you will end up being disappointed with me. If I try to pastor everyone I will pastor no one well. They have a term for pastors who try to do everything, burn out.

Then Jesus develops the friend theme by describing what characterizes his friends, you are my friend if you do what I command you, love one another (14).[[3]](#footnote-3) They are friends and no longer just servants because they understand what their master Jesus is doing. They are his friends because Jesus has revealed to them what the Father has made known to him (15). Jesus let them in on God’s purposes referring to the cross. Yet the New Testament letters often open with the author describing himself as a slave or servant of Christ. So, the terms are not mutually exclusive. He calls them his friends because he has revealed to them what God has made known to him (15:15). Servants are not normally given the reasons for obeying their master but servant friends are. We are servants of Jesus who are also friends of Jesus because reveals what he learned from the Father.

**Jesus’ Love is Displayed in Sovereign Grace (16)**

Finally, choosing to follow Jesus is grounded in his prior choice of them. Contrary to the custom of the time, Jesus chose his own disciples. But this idea goes even deeper than that. Jesus has made some incredible promises here - they are loved by Jesus, he is going to die for them, and he calls them friends. So, to keep them humble, he reminds them that they did not ultimately choose him but he chose them. That is, their choice to follow him is because he first chose them. They could start thinking that Jesus should be blessed by their presence, so he reminds them of his sovereign grace in choosing them first. On one hand all of us choose to follow Jesus. What Jesus is saying is that choice we make is based on his prior choice of us. We have seen over and over that John puts a significant emphasis on God’s sovereignty in salvation yet humanity is still morally responsible for their choices; the two truths are not in conflict. But election always is for a purpose, here it is for fruitfulness. I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, loving one another, and that your fruit abide so that whatever you ask the Father, like for the fruit of love, in my name, he may give it to you (16). So how are you doing at loving others? Loving those God has placed in your life? Are you growing in your love for others?

Questions for Life Groups:

1. Explain the metaphor Jesus uses in John 15.
2. What is the significance of the metaphor?
3. What does it mean to abide or remain in Jesus’ love?
4. Do you struggle with abiding in Jesus and his love?
5. How is the demand to obey Jesus not works?
6. What is the fruit Jesus is talking about in chapter 15?
7. What others Scriptures talk about fruit in the Christian life?
8. How is God speaking to from this chapter?
9. How are you going to respond and obey him?

1. That God is love requires a plurality in the Godhead, thus the trinity. God cannot, by nature, be love if he is a solitary being as love is a relational word. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This does not mean that Jesus does not lay down his life for his enemies (Rom 5:8) nor in conflict that humanity is at odds with God. Jesus is talking to his disciples and friends. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. There are several places in the Bible where individuals are called friends of God or Jesus but the term is not reciprocal. That is, God nor Jesus are ever called friends of a person because that would lower God and Jesus down to a reciprocal relationship that is inappropriate for God. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)