

SELF-SACRIFICE IS THE PINNACLE OF LOVE.

Review: "The vine-dresser is never closer to the vine, taking more thought over its long-term health and productivity, than when he has the knife in his hand." – N. T Wright¹

John 15:12-17

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 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. 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. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another."

Truths

- Jesus commands us to love one another **just as** He loved us – 15:12
This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

John 13:34

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 John 3:16

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

- Self-sacrifice is the **pinnacle** of love – 15:13
Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Romans 5:7-8

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- Obedience cultivates **closeness**: Our **response** reveals our **relationship** – 15:14-15
You are my friends if you do what I command you. 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.

Matthew 12:50

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

“So while God’s love is always *available*, benefiting from it is not unconditional. This principle is stated in Jude 21 which commands unambiguously, “keep yourself in the love of God.” – M. S. Mills²

- Jesus desires that our lives have a lasting impact – 15:16
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.

Q: What is the ‘fruit’?

1. Other Christ-followers – Romans 1:13b *...reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.*
 2. Long-game, ironclad, Christ-centered character – Galatians 5:22-23;
Romans 6:21-22 *But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.* ²² *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*
- Loving one another is not **optional** for Christ-followers – 15:17
These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

“The disciples had to share love among themselves, for they would not get it from the world. At this point the word “love” all but disappears from the passage, being replaced by “hate” or “hatred” (eight times in as many verses).”³ – *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*

How do we put this Greater Love into practice?

- Preach the Gospel to our emotions: Who is the final Authority?
- See yourself as a servant of others rather than others as servants.
- Reflect on what Christ did for you on the cross.

¹ N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 71.

² M. S. Mills, *The Life of Christ* (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1999), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

³ C. F. Pfeiffer, & E. F. Harrison, eds., *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].