



Love Jesus? Then Love The People He Loves

My sister's husband accepted the pastorate of a church in a small town in Kansas. One of his new parishioners hoped to ingratiate herself with the family and gain prestige in the community. "Mary Lloys," she said, "I really, really do like you."

My sister answered doubtfully, "Well, thank you."

"I like you," and then she added hurriedly, "I don't like your husband, but I really do like you!"

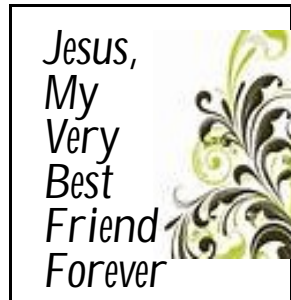
Mary Lloys looked at her and said, in her characteristic, emphatic voice, "Love me, love my dog."

When Mary Lloys told us sisters about it at Christmas, we all burst into laughter, wondering how Chuck liked being compared to a dog. Mary Lloys saw nothing funny about it. In her mind, it was almost one of the ten commandments: love me, love those I love.

Well, actually, in a sense, she was right. It is a Bible commandment.

1. We are commanded to love each other.

What new commandment did Jesus give His disciples (and us) on the night before He died? (John 13:34)



In Matthew 22:36-40 we are told the Pharisees heard that Jesus had discomfited the Sadducees, so they decided to try to trap Him. What did they ask?

What was His answer? (Matt. 22:36-40)

The one great commandment is: Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. But, this Scripture says, there is a commandment “like unto it”— of exactly the same importance. We are to love others as much as we love ourselves. (No matter what else we do, and no matter how crass it sounds, we really do love ourselves!)

The first algebraic equation I learned says,
If $a = b$, and $a = c$, then $b = c$.

Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. If Jesus loves me, and Jesus loves you, then I love you, too. It’s as simple as that—or it should be!

Our hearts heard the Lord Jesus say, “Come and talk with me,” and we answered quickly, “Lord, I am coming.” And when we came to Him, we found His presence in our lives met every need, every burden, every longing of our hearts. He became the Friend who loved us so much He went through the agony of Hell to save us. His love kept us from being self-conscious in His presence, kept us from being engrossed in our failures and lacks. We lost ourselves in the wonder of His glory and presence.

I have loved you, my people,
with an everlasting love.
With unfailing love
I have drawn you to myself.
Jeremiah 31:3

But life on earth can still be a lonely journey if we do not have friends to remind us of God's love and care. Our Creator knew how much we would need each other when He commanded us to love each other.

2. In lesson two we discussed the essentials of friendship:

A long-term commitment to the relationship is necessary. We will treasure it; we will value the personhood of the friend.

It will be intentional, purposeful, both encouraging and reproving.

It will be accepting, compassionate; not turned away by the flaws and failures of the loved one.

We will be transparent in our friendship, willing to share our deep heart concerns.

Friendship will be other-centered, not selfish, and it will endure to the very end.

God willing, you are increasingly experiencing these in your relationship with Him.

3. But if $a = b$, and $a = c$, and $b = c$, then we must love others as God has loved us. Our love will demonstrate the characteristics of His friendship with us.

Twenty-five times in the New Testament we are told to love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves.

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.” (Romans 13:8)

4. The Holy Spirit gives us two analogies to show us how intimate our friendships ought to be.

The first analogy: the Temple of God.

In First Corinthians 3:16,17, Paul tells us we are the temple of God. Just as the temple King Solomon built for the worship of God is one complete, integral structure, so Christians are one building. The stones rest on each other. We together are the temple of God and together we worship Him. We are the house in which God Himself dwells.

The second analogy: the Body of Christ.

How does First Corinthians 12:12-14 describe this?

If some part of the body feels neglected or unimportant, what is still true? (1 Corinthians 12:15-17)

Why should every one of us, as part of the body of Christ, be completely satisfied with the specific task God has given to us? (1 Cor. 12:18)

Why should a Christian never say to another Christian, “I don’t need you or your friendship”? (1 Cor. 12:21-26) .

In what ways can Christians serve the Body of Christ, according to Romans 12:3-11?

How should you judge your own ministry to others? (Romans 12:3)

Why has God given each one of us these different gifts, supplied by God’s grace? (Rom. 12:4-6)

Notice the variety of gifts God has distributed to every one of His children (Rom. 12:6-8). What are the special instructions given with certain gifts?

Prophecy: use how?

Ministering (Serving)

Teaching

Exhorting (Encouraging)

Giving: use how?

Leading? use how?

Showing mercy? with what mind-set?

When we are given a special gift from God for serving others, we are also given the responsibility to do it well.

What must always affect the ways we use our gifts? (Rom. 12:9-12)

But some things every Christian owes to others, no matter what her spiritual gift. What is that? (Rom. 12:13)

5. The extraordinary friendship we have been offered with Jesus is exactly the kind of friendship He wants us to give each other.

What three specifics does Romans 12:16 give us concerning our relationships with other Christians?

What are we commanded in Romans 14:13 concerning this friendship?

How does 1 Peter 3:8 sum up the qualities of this friendship?

And Romans 15:5-7?

How does Hebrews 3:13 encourage us to be intentional and purposeful in this relationship?

Hebrews 10:25?

Ephesians 5:19?

Our friendships will be accepting, not turned away by a friend's flaws and failures. How does Colossians 3:13 express this?

Ephesians 4:32?

Romans 12:12?

Friendship demands transparency. What does James 5:16 tell us to be sure to do?

What is required in our own relationship with Christ if we are going to experience this kind of fellowship with other believers? (1 John 1:7)

Loving others like Jesus loved us means we will be unselfish in our love. We have a right to exercise our liberty, but what must we also certainly do? (Galatians 5:13)

Because God has designed every one of us to do His

work, He has given us the gifts with which to do His work. How are we to use that gift? (1 Peter 4:10)

But the gifts God has given us to minister to others are useless, like a kid beating on a kitchen pot with a metal spatula, sheer noise, if we don't have love. First Corinthians chapter 13 describes the kind of love we must have in order to make our spiritual gifts effective.

What does Spirit-given love **do**? (1 Cor. 13:4,5,6,8)

What does true love **not do**? (1 Cor. 13:4,5,6,8)

First Corinthians 12:25 tells us there should be no division in the body, that its "parts should have equal concern for each other." If Christians truly obeyed this simple command, if we were as honestly concerned for every other Christian as we are for our own happiness, our own comfort, our own opinions, the results would be astonishing.

This living, throbbing Body of Christ can be injured, shattered, when we don't honor all members for themselves, for their unique roles as assigned by God. How can we keep

this body from being torn apart by a “schism,” a “division”?
(1 Corinthians 12:25)

The most important part of all, in our friendships, we must love “to the uttermost,” to the end. Why? (1 Peter 1:22)

How, according to 1 Peter 1:22 and John 13:34, are we to love each other?

What does this kind of pure love do? (1 Peter 4:8)

But where only can we get this kind of unselfish love?
(1 John 4:7)

These Scriptures are not suggestions, to be followed if we feel like it; they are commands from the Savior Himself. So we must be intentional about seeking out people who need friendship. The operative word may be *need*. We ought to be looking for people to bless, not simply offering friendship to people we already feel comfortable with.

What kind of love should I have for you? Fervent, intentional, because of your infinite worth to Jesus, without regard to your personality flaws, how loveable you are naturally. I should love you like Jesus loved me, when I hated Him! He loved us to the uttermost, to the end, to the gates of Hell. And that’s the love God wants you and me to show to the eternal souls of those He loves.

More—

Adam and Eve's Friendship with God

How did God make Adam aware of his need for an “help meet”? (Gen. 2:18-20)

What did Adam immediately understand about Eve? (Gen. 2:23,24)

How did Satan cause Eve to doubt God's goodness? (Gen. 3:1-5)

What “good things” did Eve see as she looked on the tree? (Gen. 3:6)

What is the significance of their hearing the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day? (Gen. 3:8)

What excuses did Adam and Eve give God for their sin? (Gen. 3:12,13; 1 Timothy 2:4,13,14)

Adam was not deceived. He ate, knowing Satan had lied. He was no less guilty (Romans 5), but his act seems to fore-shadow Jesus taking on Himself our sin.

What was the consequences of their sin? (Gen. 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; Romans 5:12-21)

But what was the gift of God through one other Man, Jesus Christ? (Romans 5:15)

What do you think God and Adam and Eve talked about in their evening strolls together for the rest of their lives? (Romans 5:20,21)

*But where sin abounded,
grace did much more abound.*



Printed from
www.joyfulchristianministries.org
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