

John 15:9-17 Friends get the job done

September 06, 2009

Unless otherwise stated, all scripture references are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Please turn to John chapter 15.

Page | 1

John 15:9-17

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

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.

11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

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.

This past week I felt God impress on my heart that he wants to speak to us as a church this morning about what it means to be a friend.

And part of the reason I felt this is that I believe he wants to communicate something to us of how we as a church are to be toward each other - particularly as we work together in advancing his kingdom.

It is a very easy thing to fall into a mindset that always just wants to get the job done often at the expense of genuine friendship and in fact it can be said that friendship can and does get in the way of getting the job done.

But I believe that Jesus wants to show us that in his kingdom friends working together is THE way we get the job done.

If you have ever been to any sort of management training course one of the questions that will invariably come up is *can a manager be a friend with those he leads?*

I have to admit that I have often struggled with this idea for many years as I have been in leadership positions in my workplace and also within the church.

The conventional wisdom would say that you cannot be friends with those you lead and still expect to get things done.

So, I have always known what the “right” answer has been but I have never been really satisfied with this answer and it is only been over these last few weeks that I have come to believe that unless you are friends with each other and those you lead, you cannot expect to get things done well over the long term.

This to me is also borne out by what Jesus - arguably the greatest leader that has ever lived - said in the passage we just read.

Let's take a closer look at this passage.

The main theme is the disciple's relationship to Jesus and their relationship to each other and we will see that the context is working together to get things done - bearing fruit.

John 15:9-17

Verse 9

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

You could never start a management training course this way, it just wouldn't work. However, in the Kingdom of God things are supposed to get done in a completely different way to the way they do in the world.

The way we begin is by knowing that we are loved by Jesus and that we are to abide in his love, which means to remain, stay, to continue, to endure or to exist permanently and inseparably in his love.

How are we to do this?

Verse 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.

Obedience is how we abide in his love. Obedience requires submission which is a willingness to do the will of another person as though it was your own will.

But aren't we as Christians supposed to be living free from rules, regulations and laws? Isn't that why I left my last church because there were too many rules? Aren't we supposed to be under grace and not law?

So why is Jesus getting all heavy with us and requiring that we keep his commandments?

Verse 11

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Obedience brings joy. If we could only grasp this truth and live it out fully in our lives we would see how much joy there is to be found in being obedient.

- Children to parents
- Husbands to wives and wives to husbands
- Students to teachers
- Workers to managers
- Believers to their leaders

It's disobedience that brings frustration and a lack of joy in our lives.

Think about what it did for Adam and Eve. They thought they were going to be liberated by disobeying God's command, but instead they lost their innocence and were plunged into a place where they only felt guilt and shame and lost their joy.

So what is it that we need to do to obey Jesus' command?

Verse 12

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

It's not a suggestion or a piece of advice. It's a command. If we are to have his joy in our lives to its fullest then we must love one another based upon how he loves us.

This doesn't come automatically, but can I suggest that you spend time thinking just how Jesus loves you and what you draw from that love and then by his grace apply that same love to others.

Verse 13

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

This is the pinnacle of friendship and the way we ultimately measure our friendship.
Are you too busy for friendship?

Do you have too much on your plate that you can't spend time developing and seeking friendship?

If push came to shove would you be willing to sacrifice your life for your friends?

Verse 14

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Okay this seems to be a contradiction of terms. How can we be friends if you expect me to be obedient to you? That means you're my boss and not my friend.

Is this your initial reaction to this verse? It has been mine for many years, but is it a contradiction?

This appears to be a contradiction because we tend to think of friendship only as peer to peer or equal to equal. We have been taught and have it ingrained in us that we cannot be friends with our kids as they are growing up and some parents often still struggle to be friends with their children even when they are adults.

We have been programmed to respect and obey authority figures but not to be friends with them. So, why is Jesus messing with our minds on this one?

The answer is that relationships often function on different levels.

We tend to think of friendships as purely peer to peer, our school friends or our work mates and never with authority figures. We are taught to respect authority figures but not to be friends with them.

In our relationship with Jesus he is showing us the true way, that not only are we to respect authority figures but by finding the balance we can also be friends with authority figures.

How does this work?

Let's take an example of a child growing up. If we rush friendship too early in a child's development then they are not taught obedience and they lose respect for authority. But also if we don't teach them how to be friends then they have a distorted understanding of authority. They need both and so do we.

Verse 15-16

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.

Jesus came to die for the sins of the world, but he also came and established a team of 12 men who were to carry this message and to let the world know that this was his purpose. His ministry was twofold in that sense.

But it didn't stop here; shortly after Jesus was raised from the dead this team grew to 5,000 people and has never stopped growing ever since.

It took the disciples a little while to catch what his ultimate purpose was, but when they did they lived and died exclusively to serve his purpose.

And it was at this time that he brought about a shift or a change in their relationship with him. From now on they were to continue to know Jesus as master, but now also as friend.

And he did this by letting them IN on what the father was showing him. Friends are prepared to share the deep things of their lives.

In fact I can say that leaders share vision and allow people to be involved in fulfilling that vision.

Managers often are more than happy to keep the status quo and know that if they share certain information they lose their power.

As we will see in Acts Jesus was the ultimate leader in that he divested his power to his disciples in the form of the Holy Spirit. But not only this, he is continually revealing what he wants to do with us as his friends through that same Holy Spirit.

Verse 17

These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

We finish off with Jesus once again commanding us as our lord and instructing us as our friend. Love one another. Friends love one another.

So if this is how it works with our relationship with Jesus, how does it work with us whom he has chosen that we would bear much fruit and that our fruit would remain?

1) **How do you see me?**

First Jesus has delegated some of his authority to leadership within his church. For many of us we feel that we cannot be friends with our pastors. Let me tell you this is a lie from the pit of hell. Some pastors perpetuate this myth but if Jesus the great pastor said that he no longer called the disciples servants but friends, then the surely his under shepherds need to cultivate friendship.

Let me say that in my mind I know that God has established me as a shepherd to all of you, but also as a friend.

That's how I see each of you, I am concerned for each of you and how you are doing, but how do you see me?

Are you afraid to be completely honest with me?

Are you afraid that if you were to be honest with me about your struggles, hurts, disappointments, and sins then I would be upset and not want to know you?

If you feel any of those things, I personally give you permission to reject them outright. They are lies from the devil. You are my friends.

What about if you have something against me?

Are you prepared to speak to me about it or will you just let it fester and infect your perception of me?

Once again I give you permission to speak to me privately and let me know what it is.

Can I say it may be legitimate or it may just be a misunderstanding?

Let's talk about it. I'll try not to be Peter Perfect as my wife sometimes calls me, but rather discuss openly with you.

I would also like to say that I'm here for you, please do not hesitate to call me. We may just hang out together over a coffee and just shoot the breeze. That's what friends do. Let me tell you that I'm never too busy to do this and love it.

2) **How do you see each other?**

Friction will come as we work together and don't always see eye to eye on how things should be done, but friends are prepared to continue to love each other and WORK through their differences.

Sometimes I may ask some of you to do things together in groups of two. I do this because that's what Jesus did and it is how we work out our friendships.

There are too many lone rangers in the kingdom of God, but it is not God's way. Teamwork is his way. Partnerships are his way. Friendships are his way.

3) **How do you see the lost?**

Finally, how do we see the lost, those who don't know Jesus? Are we prepared to be friendly with them and at different times to befriend them? To model Jesus' leadership who was cynically labelled a friend of sinners. Are we prepared to be a friend of sinners?

Are we prepared to leave the comfort of our homes to seek the lost as Jesus was prepared to leave his home to seek us?

The world of the lost is where we are to bear our fruit both in the way we live our lives and in the way we seek to find lost people.

This is Jesus mission and it still is. He is calling us to get over our differences, to love each other unreservedly, to be friends with him and each other, to go and bear fruit so that our fruit would remain.

Are you prepared to work at these things? They don't come easy, but they are eternally worth it.

Friends, let's pray.