

John 13:31-35 - Biblical Discipleship

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[0 : 0 0] He visited her home and while she was out there getting him a cup of tea, he couldn't help but notice a bowl full of the most perfect looking peanuts there on the coffee table.

! As the conversation kind of continued after a few moments he looked down and noticed that he'd finished the whole bowl.

Rather embarrassed he perhaps tried to deflect from his overindulgence he remarked again how perfect these peanuts were not to mention how delicious they were.

And the elderly woman looked at the empty bowl and looked up at the young man and said young man since I no longer have my own teeth I can't eat peanuts. So I just sucked the chocolate off and spit them into the bowl.

The moral of the story is that not everything appears as it should. And what is true of once chocolate covered peanuts is also true of people who think they are disciples of Jesus and in reality are not.

[1 : 2 1] Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 verse 21 not everyone who says to me Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. For the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven.

And then he says on that day many will say to me Lord Lord did we not prophesy in your name cast out demons in your name do many mighty works in your name. And then I will declare to them I never knew you depart from me you workers of lawlessness.

Not everyone who talks about heaven is going. So let's spend a few moments asking God to help us as we open to John chapter 13.

Father, thank you for this moment that you are doing. Lord, thank you for speaking to our hearts already. Lord, thank you, Lord, that you're not content with leaving your people as lukewarm, half-hearted, struggling followers of Jesus.

Thank you, Lord, that you breathe new life into your people. Lord, and you've promised, Lord, to do a work in us, Lord, that you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ, until that day when we look at you, Lord, and we might say, Lord, Lord, and you would say, come in, welcome, good and faithful.

[2 : 5 6] And so, Lord, how we get there, how we get to the good and faithful, Lord, is, you might say, our life's quest. Lord, help us as we open your word, Lord, may your spirit speak to our hearts.

Lord, as we've been speaking so many times over the last few weeks, Lord, we don't just want to have more information. Lord, but we pray by your spirit that you would pour into us.

Lord, not that we would get, you know, fat Christians just swelled up on knowledge. Your word says that knowledge has a tendency to puff up, Lord, and we don't want that.

And so, Lord, we pray, Lord, that we would be both poured into and poured out of today. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. So, you know that we've been talking about church vision and how we want to see every person developing a living faith in Christ.

And over the last couple of weeks, we've made a point that there is the gospel, which is about the king and the kingdom. And the king has come and the kingdom is at hand.

[4 : 15] And the really a good definition of a Christian is someone who has bowed the knee to the king and who is living the life in the kingdom.

And that means daily surrender. And as we daily surrender, we are poured into by the spirit, conforming us, transforming us.

And a couple of weeks ago, we made the point that there is really no difference between a Christian and a disciple, only a disobedient disciple. And that's hard to hear, isn't it? Because we have to conclude, well, maybe that's me.

And so last week, we looked at Matthew chapter 4, and then we concluded that to be a disciple is this life of surrender.

And it's about the life of surrender, a life of being poured into. As we surrender to God, as we give up our own kind of self-righteousness, and our self, and we surrender our will to his, he pours into us.

[5 : 28] And he pours into us with the purpose of us pouring out. And we've all been touched, haven't we, by other Christians who have seemed to have just been able to pour out the love of Jesus.

And so pouring in is the life of Jesus given to us through the spirit. That's what Galatians is about. The life of a follower of Jesus is not an improved version of our old self.

It's not Christian 2.0. The life of the believer of Jesus is the very life of Jesus living within us. That's what we sung about this morning. It's your breath that we sing with.

And pouring out into others is what we then are to do because that is what Jesus has done. And that's what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It's one life, his life, being poured out into another.

And actually Romans chapter 5 verse 5 says that God's love has been poured out into our hearts. Through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. And so what happens when the life of Jesus is poured out into his people through the spirit?

[6 : 39] What happens when the life of Jesus is poured out into his people through the spirit? And then how would you know?

What would someone expect to see in your life as a result of having the life of Christ in it? Well Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 verse 20 that you will recognize them by their fruits.

So the way that we can know that those who are following Jesus is that there is a tangible and recognizable difference between those that are and those that are not.

It's not a problem to be all judgy. Alright? This is judgment, isn't it? Jesus says, well you're going to know them. Some will have fruit, some won't have fruit.

Okay, so what is the fruit? Well that you know the Hebrew and Greek for love. So resounding no. That you pray in tongues.

[7 : 47] That you heal the sick. Do miracles, move mountains by your faith. Well clearly the answer is no. And Paul actually says that.

He says though I have all of these things and I don't have love. I'm just like a drum kit being played very badly. A clashing symbol is what he says. Paul says in Galatians chapter 5 that the fruit of the spirit, you'll know them by the fruits, the fruit of the spirit is love.

And then he lists a whole number of virtues that flow from love. Joy, peace, patience. I always get to that and I just like pause.

Not because it's patience but just because I need it. Do you know what I mean? Like, Lord give us patience. Kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

So there is one fruit of the spirit, right? And there are a number of virtues that flow from that one fruit. Such as joy and peace and so on.

- [8 : 53] And look, the New Testament, it screams that the unloving Christian is like the rainbow unicorn, right? Like it doesn't exist.
- You can't have unloving and Christian really in the same sentence. To be unloving and call yourself Christian is really to be at war with the teaching of the Bible.
- To be a follower of Jesus, to be someone who is developing a living faith in Christ, is someone who is producing the fruit of the spirit, namely love.
- And so today, I want to focus our hearts and minds on this question. And it's coming on the screen. What does my love look like?
- I think I'll put it on the slide. But it's only like six words, so you guys are all right with that. What does my love look like? And by my love, I mean the love that you show.
- [9 : 58] Right? Not necessarily, you know, the love that you conjure up on your own. It's the love that you show. What does my love look like? Or to put it another way, which always seems to help me at least.
- If I could ask the person sitting in front of you this morning, give me an example of how they love you, I wonder what they would say.
- Now you might say, well, there's no one sitting in front of me. That's the benefit of sitting in the first row. That should be a lesson to all of us. And look, and to help us think through that question, what does my love look like?
- I want us to turn to John 13, and I want us to focus specifically, and I want to try and draw this out as best I can. I want us to focus on the contrast between self-love, self-love, and specifically the self-love of Judas and Peter, and the new love that we're commanded to walk in.
- And honestly, you know, I've talked through the Gospel of John like four times, I think, in entirety, and I've never noticed this, never noticed this before, how almost John seems to set up Judas and Jesus and then Peter in the one passage, talking about love.
- [11 : 32] So let's see if we can do that. Let me see if I can draw that out, and then let's just, you know, see what the Lord has for us. So verse 31, we'll pick it up, and we read that when he had gone out, and so I know we're jumping right into the middle of a big passage, so let me just stop there and say straight away that Jesus is sharing right now in this passage, he's sharing the Passover meal with his disciples.
- That's what he's doing. He's on the night, you know, he's going to be taken away, arrested, you know, he's going to be on trial. It's that same night, and so the he there in verse 31 is Judas Iscariot.
- Now, if we were in a panto, everybody would be like, boo, right? Because this is the guy no one's naming their kids after, okay? Like, you know, I don't know how many times, many years I've been a teacher, I've never met a Judas, right?
- I've met a couple of Judas, which is the Old Testament, the Hebrew version, but I've never met any Judases, right? And so, we all know that this guy comes with a fair deal of baggage.
- This is the guy who betrayed Jesus for money, and he is undoubtedly following the footsteps of another Judas, Judah, right?
- [12 : 50] from the Old Testament who sold his brothers to travelers. Same idea, okay? And before we beat up on Judas too much, I'm not sure loving money more than loving Jesus is unique to Judas, right?
- Like, I'm pretty sure people elevate money over the call of Jesus every day. And what interests me is, you know, there's a bit in, in Zechariah 11 that prophesies that Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, but it never mentions that he would be a friend.

Like, he could have literally been a stranger, but the fact that it's a friend makes it a little bit harder to swallow. He could have been a friend, he could have been a stranger, but he wasn't.

Jesus had spent three years pouring into this man. And that's got to be hard emotionally, hasn't it? Jesus is what the old hymn writer describes as the man of sorrows.

Right? His sorrow was not just confined to the cross. There was an emotional sorrow that he bore as well. And so Judas is a picture for us of a disciple who is governed by the flesh and not by the spirit.

[14 : 18] I think we have to make note of that because again, I think there's some set up for us in the text that kind of is highlighting that for us. That you have Judas who is, and we'll talk about this in a minute, is all about self-love.

Self-love in the worst and most negative connotation possible. And then look forward to verse 36. Not as in look forward like I hope it comes, but just skip to verse 36.

Right? Verse 36 says, Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? And Jesus answered, where I'm going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterwards. And Peter said to him, Lord, why can't I follow you now?

And I will lay down my life for you. And Jesus says, really Peter? Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not grow until you have denied me three times.

And so we know the story that that this prophecy of his denial will come true that very evening. And so the incredible thing here is that Jesus' teaching and what it means to be a disciple and tells us in verse 24 that there is a new commandment which is to love one another.

[15 : 38] Right before he says that and then right after he says that we're given two examples of self-love. So in the middle he says, a new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you and I come is sandwiched between an example of someone who doesn't love like Jesus both times, Judas and Peter.

self-love is what comes from a life that is not powered by the spirits in pouring from Jesus.

It's devoid of the spirit and devoted to the flesh you might say. That's how Paul describes it in the letter to the Galatians there in chapter 5 verse 16 he says I say to you walk by the spirit and you might say look, walk in daily surrender to the will and ways of Jesus.

Walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. If you walk by the spirit you won't be consumed with self-love fleshly love for the desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh for these who are opposed to each other.

So this is exactly what we're saying. You can't have an unloving Christian that is at war with the teachings of the Bible. Now you might say I don't know what self-love looks like and actually it's a fairly new phrase but it's an amazingly common phrase and we may not know what self-love looks like because self-love is pretty deceptive.

[17 : 29] So let me give you some ideas and see if any of these strike a chord with you and as I was thinking about this week these are pretty much all lifted from my own experience and so I not only value your prayers but as I'm thinking about myself I'm thinking well maybe some of these strike a chord with other people so what does self-love look like?

Self-love is the excessive focus on oneself seeking admiration or validation while disregarding others. It's seen in the prioritizing either the way that we look or the level of value you place on your own achievements.

I know it's a problem because Paul wrote about it to the Church of Philippi and he said do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit if it wasn't a problem Paul would not have had to say that.

He says but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. See the contrast? One is of the flesh selfish ambition and conceit one is of the spirit humility.

These things are at war with each other. Another example of self-love is prideful self-exaltation elevating oneself above others.

[18 : 48] Often believe in your superior or more deserving. Like if you ever heard yourself say I just can't believe I deserve whatever it might be.

This can and I know this isn't you. This is only me when I'm in an argument with my wife. But this can be seen in refusing to admit when you're wrong.

It can be seen in talking over others to get your point across. It's seen in self-indulgence pursuing pleasure, comfort, desires without regard for others' will.

Overspending on this, that and the other while neglecting generosity or stewardship. 1 John chapter 2 verse 16 All that is in the world John says the desires of the flesh desires of the eyes of pride of life is not from the father.

It's seen in self-pity focusing on your struggles to the point of ignoring others' needs or refusing help. One of the most frustrating things I think that I come across probably every single day is people who refuse help.

[20 : 09] Constantly seeing yourself as a victim. Withdrawing from meaningful relationships. It's seen in envy and comparison, overly focusing on what others have that you don't, leading to resentment or insecurity.

Paul writes to the Church of Galatians again, he says, let's not be conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. It's seen in self-righteousness, thinking of yourself as spiritually superior, so that you look down on others.

Seen in judging others harshly while ignoring your own faults. Jesus warned us about this in Matthew 7, he says, you hypocrite, which is the Greek word for actor, you actor, take first the log out of your own eye, then you will see clearly the speck in your brothers.

Seeking identity and achievements or position, defining your worth by what you do rather than who you are in Christ. Seen in feeling superior when successful or worthless when you fail.

And finally, if we are feeling hit by any of those, we also need to watch out for perfectionism, placing unreasonable demands on yourself to maintain control or feel worthy, leading to stress or burnout.

[21 : 30] So you never celebrate your own or anyone else's achievements because you always feel like you fall short. Like, there's probably more, but I couldn't think of any more.

I think the flow of the New Testament when it talks about don't do this, don't do this, don't do that, most of those are covered, which tells me that it's a general problem. We have a general problem with self-love, we have a general problem with self-preservation, we have a general problem with not willing to surrender to the wills and ways of the Lord.

I think we can all see aspects of self-love in all of us, can't we? Because each of us still wrestles with the flesh because none of us are perfect.

And here we see Judas and Peter both walking in self-love. Like Judas is just, he's out to get, the money has bedazzled him, Peter's self-preservation.

And Jesus is here, causes disciples to lay down self and surrender to a higher love. And this is why here, Jesus commands love, and notice this, Jesus commands love in the context filled with relational failure and heartbreak.

[23 : 01] This message isn't given in Matthew chapter 5 where he's sat on a nice side of a hill speaking to a whole bunch of people that don't really know him and are going to keep coming and going and it's a nice bright sunny day.

This isn't Matthew 5. This is John 13, he's about to go to the cross. Two of his best friends have just denied him and betrayed him. And so this command is given in that context and I'll tell you why.

You can only love this way through the power of the Holy Spirit. You can only do it that way. And that comes with surrendering to that.

It's being obedient to that. And we'll talk about it in a moment. It's a choice to be made to love this way. So, verse 31, we're doing brilliantly.

Verse 31, when he had gone out, that's the context. Jesus said, now is the Son of Man glorified. Now let's just kind of cover these verses as we go.

[24 : 11] I don't think Judas knew that what he was doing had set in motion the final events of Jesus' life. His arrest, his trial, his humiliation, his condemnation, you know, the beatings, the crucifixion, the burial.

Jesus says, now it was about to happen. And he's referring to it as glorification. Isn't that crazy? And he actually mentions it, what, five times in the space of two verses?

And this is just another example of a contrast. Like we think, oh, this is clearly Jesus' darkest day, and Jesus says, you know what, I don't really see it like that. This is when the Father is glorified in me.

Because he's looking at the cross and he's knowing, what would be accomplished through it. And he could say then, this is a place of glory. He says, now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once. And then he says, little children, verse 33, which is a term of love expressing Jesus' concern for the people that he has in front of him.

[25 : 19] He says, little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me. And just as I had said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I'm going, you cannot come.

Now, of course, this would have been incredibly difficult for his disciples to hear. We saw two weeks ago how these disciples had literally left everything to follow Jesus.

They perhaps expected to be given positions of honour and authority in the kingdom, and now to hear him say that he would leave, and where he is going, they can't come, that would have been hard to say the least.

And look, if you remember actually at the beginning of this chapter, this comes off the back of Jesus washing their feet. So all in the same passage, Jesus is washing their feet, he's doing the job of a slave, and Peter again is the one who couldn't understand why Jesus would do that.

Jesus, what are you doing? At one point he says, right? What are you up to? Like none of us have ever said that, right? None of us have ever prayed, Lord, what are you up to? And Jesus answers, and I think actually the old Americans standard version puts it so sweetly.

[26 : 49] It's that Jesus says, what I do now thou knowest not, but thou shalt know in the hereafter. Isn't that good?

Like, I don't know, I don't know how many times I've just recited that to myself over the years. What I do now thou knowest not. And he'd be like, you're right, but thou shalt know in the hereafter.

So many of our struggles, so many of our questions can be answered, thou shalt know in the hereafter. And so his disciples are confused about these things, right?

And so Jesus says to them in verse 34, a new commandment I give to you. And this is our text, right? So verse 34, a new commandment I give to you.

Okay, so what's new about it? Well, it's not chronologically new just because it's coming at the end of Jesus's life. All right?

[27 : 55] So there's nothing chronological like new in time. It's new in nature, yes. It's new in substance, of course. But look, in the Old Testament, the Old Testament isn't devoid of love.

You know, we spent several months looking at the book of Leviticus, and in Leviticus chapter 19, it says, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So the Old Testament isn't devoid of love.

So what is new about this? Well, Jesus has come on the scene, and of course, what is new is that he has demonstrated what love actually means.

He has shown us what love looks like. So when he says, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you, and that's the standard. And again, just look at the comparison.

In the Old Testament, in there in Leviticus, it is love your neighbor as yourself. In John, this new commandment is love one another as I.

[28 : 59] You see the difference? Love your neighbor as yourself. I can do that. Pretty easy. Easier. Love one another as I.

No, no, no, no, no, no, that's off the scale hard. His love that loves me is a forgiving love.

And actually, that's the only kind of love that can forgive me, right? We can all think of another Christian in our life right now. I bet we can. That we need to forgive.

Ephesians 4 verse 32 says, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. That's powerful, isn't it?

It's a commandment. It's a choice that we have. Yeah, but I don't feel like it. like, I'm pretty sure Jesus didn't feel like going to the cross, but he chose to.

[30 : 11] And this is what is new, this is what is new about it. Like, wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if all of our friends came here and noticed that the difference between this place and every other place is that we were kind to one another.

And we were tender hearted. You know what that word tender hearted means? It means compassionate. You're like, well, that doesn't help me any, thanks very much. Okay, let me tell you what compassionate means.

It is the understanding and acceptance that we're all made of strength and struggle. It's understanding and accepting that no one is immune to pain or suffering, and rather than having an attitude that I am better than you, or, and we see this in church all the time, I can fix you.

It's a practice of shared suffering. First Peter chapter three, verse eight, Peter says, finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart.

That's our idea, tenderness. love, and a humble moment. So this kind of love is a forgiving love.

[31 : 40] This kind of love is a compassionate love. This love that loves me is a doing love. love. He didn't just say it, did he?

Jesus didn't just open, like, well, he didn't at all. He didn't open heaven, poke his head out of the clouds, and kind of go, I love you, and then seal the clouds up again, and then disappear. Like, he expressed his love.

He showed his love. He demonstrated his love. Romans chapter five, verse eight, that God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, not even, not friends, while we were still sinners, Jesus demonstrated it by dying for us.

It's a sacrificial kind of love. It's a servant-hearted kind of love. It's the same kind of love that would wash the disciples' feet, not based on the worthiness of the other person.

Look, we talked about this last week and the week before, about following Jesus. This kind of love is a costly kind of love.

[32 : 54] It's going to cost you because it costs Jesus. This love that loves me is a committed kind of love.

It doesn't rise and fall with the coming and going of emotions. God made up his mind to love me despite all of the obvious failings and flaws.

And if we're going to follow Jesus, if we're going to be disciples of Jesus, if we're going to see every person developing and living faith in Christ, we have to make up our minds that our love is not going to change.

Jesus said, a new commandment I give to you. This is not another commandment I give to you. This is a new commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you and also and you are also to love one another.

Then verse 35 he says by this singular by this one thing all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

[34 : 26] Jesus said in Matthew 24 of the last days he said Matthew 24 verse 12 because lawlessness will increase the love of many will grow cold.

What he says is that the agape which isn't God's love we get that confused as a myth in Christian circles that you have God's love and you have phileo which is brotherly love and you have storge which is family love and eros which is romantic love and then you have agape which is God's love that's wrong it's completely wrong if you ever read that it's a myth there's even passage in the Bible I think I want to pull off the top of my head Luke chapter 5 it talks about sinners loving and it uses the word agape it's like how can that be if that's God's love this is the quality of God's love it's not uniquely belonging to God and Jesus says there in Matthew 24 because lawlessness will increase the love of many the agape of many will grow cold look he isn't he isn't warning unbelievers he's warning believers that it's possible for our love to grow cold our love for the

Lord our love for others you know the world out there is disintegrating isn't it and it's filled with self love it's it's filled with it's filled with hate it's filled with violence it's filled with division it's filled with prejudice and look the danger is that even our agape can grow cold please don't let that happen here you know it says that John the apostle after he returned from Patmos remember he'd been boiled in oil he'd been sent off to Patmos he received the revelation came back he was crippled he had to be carried everywhere he he was stationed in

Ephesus in the church Ephesus and this is by then he's the last living apostle his nickname was Brontophorus the thunder voice this is the same guy who'd called down fire or asked Jesus to call down fire on the Samaritans very loving right he's like Lord would you just smite them right now and here he is being carried from church to church and everywhere along the road people are lining the roads waiting to see John and this is what he would write at that time he said in 1 John 3 16 by this we know love that he laid his life down for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers it's like he summarized it perfectly 1 John 4 verse 7 beloved let us let us love one another white for love is from

God the more the more that we surrender to the will and ways of the king the more the holy spirit is pouring that love into us he says whoever loves has been born of God of the spirit and knows God look this love that I know died sacrificially for me it's a love that went out to win me it's a love that prays for me at the right hand of the father interceding for me it's a love that is coming back to get me what does our love look like let's ask God to pour into us to help us surrender every day to his will and his ways to give us ears to hear what the spirit is saying to us because no one wants our love do they like our love will just make a mess of things we need the

[39 : 13] Lord's love being poured out into us Father would you do that with us Lord we confess Lord that we sometimes try so hard to love and we make a mess of things sometimes we don't try at all and we allow self love to take control Lord and we ask that you would forgive us Lord when we've been self centered self righteous self preserving and even self perfectionist Lord we want to not just rest in your grace but we want to rest in your love Lord and we know that that is costly Lord we know that that is something that is not easy Lord and we don't want just to talk about love Lord the love that we need we know comes from your spirit as we surrender each day to you and so maybe it's not an issue of love maybe it's an issue of surrender and

Lord so as we as we empty us of us Lord we pray Lord that you would fill! fill us with you with your spirit so even even the command to love wouldn't seem like a command Lord we want to say sorry for all the times Lord we have elevated ourselves above the needs of others we have sought achievement position whatever it may be maybe we've had a habit of just not admitting when we're wrong or maybe we have a habit of talking over others thinking of what we're going to say next just to prove our point Lord would you humble our hearts Lord would you would you help us

Lord to to follow in the ways of Jesus in the love of Jesus who though was in the form of God did not consider robbery to be equal with God but humbled himself Lord so we ask desperately Lord that we would know and experience this love as we lay down our lives as we put our lives on the altar each day Lord would we notice in pouring of your spirit the fruit of which is love would we know that for ourselves but then Lord would those who are sat in front of us this morning and beside us and behind us and those people we're going to meet in the office tomorrow or in the queue at Tesco or wherever it may be Lord would they know that love Lord would they know the king and that the king has come and the kingdom is near and he calls all to bow the knee and confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord Lord we can't give that away unless we have it ourselves and so we pray that you would just revive Lord as we confess those things in our hearts even right now Lord that we just need to surrender to you those things that we hold on to sometimes they're grudges sometimes they're the feeling of we deserve stuff and we don't maybe we're holding on to things for self preservation like Peter Lord we just give them to you now we surrender them to you Lord we're not fearful about the emptiness that giving them over to you will leave in our lives Lord we trust you that you would fill that void you would fill that vacuum with you

Lord we don't want to walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit and so each day we ask Lord that we would be able to hear your voice Lord and obey your voice surrender and that you would Lord fill us in such a way that even that promise in John 4 would come true in our own lives that out of our lives would flow rivers of living water Lord surely this is what it means to have a living faith in Christ and so Lord we pray help us Lord none of us have perfected this none of us are even close so Lord as we join in again now and sing to you Lord may this just be our surrender to you!

[44 : 44] in the quietness and the peace of this room before the kids come back Lord may our hearts just be reaching out to you and asking God would you restore to us our first love in Jesus name as