



May 3 – Friend of God

Weekly Reading – John 15-19 // Today's Passage – John 15:12-17

Main Point

Jesus calls His followers friends and commissions them to bear spiritual fruit.

MAIN PASSAGE – 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. (ESV)

Background

John 15:12–17 takes place during Jesus’ final teaching to His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, often referred to as the Upper Room Discourse (John 13–17). In this setting, Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure and giving them essential truths for how they are to live and continue His mission. The command to “love one another” is not new in Scripture, but Jesus deepens it by defining it through His own example—sacrificial love. In the first-century Jewish context, the idea of laying down one’s life for others would have been understood as the highest expression of loyalty and devotion.

Jesus’ statement that He no longer calls His disciples servants but friends would have carried significant weight in that culture. While servants obeyed commands without

necessarily understanding their master's purposes, a friend was someone who was trusted with insight and relationship. This does not remove Jesus' authority but reveals a deeper level of intimacy and revelation. Additionally, the language of being "chosen" and "appointed" reflects God's sovereign initiative in salvation and mission. Bearing "fruit" in this passage refers not only to personal spiritual growth but also to a life that produces lasting impact through obedience, love, and participation in God's work.

Christ Connection

This passage points directly to the heart of the gospel: Jesus demonstrates the greatest love by laying down His life for His friends. While humanity was still separated from God by sin, Christ willingly went to the cross to secure forgiveness and reconciliation (Romans 5:8). Through His death and resurrection, Jesus not only saves sinners but brings them into a restored relationship with God, where they are no longer merely servants but are welcomed as friends who know His purposes. Because of what Christ has done, believers are both recipients of His love and participants in His mission, empowered to bear lasting spiritual fruit as they abide in Him and walk in obedience.

Life Group - The Flow

- 15 minutes - Conversation and relationship-building
 - 15 minutes - Year of Prayer guided prayer time
 - 5 minutes - Introduction (icebreaker, activity, or illustration)
 - 35 minutes - Study and apply the Bible
 - 5 minutes - Optional activity
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Year of Prayer (15 min)

Always pause and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time of prayer.

We give praise to You, Father God, "the only wise God, through Jesus Christ – to (You) be the glory forever!" Romans 16:27 and Revelation 4:18 reminds us that we should fall before You, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come."

- **Share your words of Adoration to the Father now. (pause)**

We love You Lord.

Father, we ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of our need to pray for prodigals and those who've yet to acknowledge You as Savior. Turn their hearts of stone to hearts of clay, allowing them to hear and understand Your truth.

- **Let's speak the names of the prodigals and those without Christ, aloud now. (pause)**

Father, forgive us when we fail to acknowledge our countless blessings and Your goodness to us moment-to-moment. We thank You for the freedom to worship without fear of persecution. We thank You for the ability to read and comprehend the Bible, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **Take a moment now to share your words of thanksgiving to the Father (pause)**

There are so many needs around us, those who are sick, those in need of employment, those in need of rest and peace.

- **Have group members start with those we are asking God to Save:**
 - **Friends**
 - **Family**
 - **Co-workers**
 - **Others**
- **Then have group members share Prayer Requests**

With hearts full of joy and anticipation, we pray in agreement in the name of Jesus, our Lord, and our Redeemer. Amen

Introduction (5 min)

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Ask:

- **Who is your “ride or die” friend? The person you know would show up no matter what—no questions asked.**

Let a few people answer.

Follow-Up Question:

- **What do you think separates that kind of friendship from just casual relationships?**

Transition to Passage 1:

“We all have people we’d call ‘ride or die’ – friends who show up no matter what. But in John 15, Jesus takes that idea even further. He shows us what true friendship really looks like – and then He invites us into that kind of relationship with Him.”

Study and Discuss (40 min)

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic.

Teaching Toolbox Tip

The “Connect Identity to Action” Method

Many passages, like this one, move from who we are in Christ to what we are called to do. Help your group see that connection clearly.

How to Use It

As you lead, point out:

“Jesus first tells them who they are—His friends—and then shows them what that means—loving others and bearing fruit.”

Then ask questions that connect the two:

- “How does knowing you are loved by Jesus change the way you live?”
- “What actions should flow out of that identity?”

Tip: Avoid jumping straight to application. Let the group first understand who they are in Christ, then guide them to how that shapes their response.

Passage 1 – John 15:12-13

READ THE PASSAGE – Have a volunteer read John 15:12-13.

[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.

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

15:12. Jesus gives a clear and direct command: “love one another as I have loved you.” This command is rooted in His own example, not in human standards of love. The love Jesus refers to is sacrificial, intentional, and rooted in obedience to the Father. It reflects the same love He has already demonstrated and will ultimately display fully at the cross. This command is not optional for believers—it is a defining mark of true discipleship (cf. John 13:34–35). Loving others is not merely emotional but is expressed through action, humility, and selflessness.

15:13. Jesus defines the greatest expression of love: laying down one’s life for one’s friends. In the first-century context, this would have been understood as the highest form of devotion and sacrifice. While people might occasionally risk their lives for others, Jesus points to something greater—His own willing, substitutionary death on

behalf of sinners. This verse ultimately points forward to the cross, where Jesus fulfills this statement in full. His love is not theoretical; it is demonstrated through sacrificial action.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What does Jesus command His followers to do in these verses?
2. **Discuss.** What does it look like to love others the way Jesus loves us in everyday life?
3. **Discuss.** When have you experienced this kind of sacrificial love from someone else, and how did it impact you?
4. **Deeper Dive.** What keeps us from loving others this way, and what would need to change in our hearts for us to obey this command more fully?

Transition to Passage 2:

“We’ve seen in John 10 who Jesus is—the Good Shepherd who protects and lays down His life for His sheep. Psalm 23 helps us feel what that kind of care and protection looks like in everyday life.”

Passage 2 – John 15:14-15

READ THE PASSAGE – Have a volunteer read John 15:14-15

[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.

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

15:14. Jesus connects love and obedience by stating that His disciples are His friends if they do what He commands. This does not suggest that obedience earns His friendship, but rather that obedience is the evidence of a genuine relationship with Him. True friendship with Jesus involves trust, alignment with His will, and a desire to follow His commands. In biblical terms, love and obedience are inseparable (cf. John 14:15). A relationship with Christ is not merely relational in feeling but is expressed through faithful obedience.

15:15. Jesus deepens the understanding of this relationship by contrasting servants and friends. A servant carries out instructions without necessarily knowing the master’s intentions, but a friend is brought into deeper knowledge and relationship. Jesus reveals that He has made known to His disciples everything He has received from the Father, indicating a level of intimacy and revelation. This does not remove His authority as Lord, but it highlights the privilege believers have in knowing God’s purposes and being included in His redemptive plan.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** According to verse 14, what is the connection between loving Jesus and obeying Him?
2. **Discuss.** What do these verses teach us about the kind of relationship Jesus wants to have with His followers?
3. **Discuss.** How does understanding Jesus as both Lord and Friend shape the way we relate to Him?
4. **Deeper Dive.** What might keep someone from fully embracing a close, personal relationship with Jesus, even if they believe in Him?

Passage 3 - John 15:16-17

READ THE PASSAGE - Have a volunteer read John 15:16-17

[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.

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

15:16. Jesus reminds His disciples that their relationship with Him did not originate with them—they did not choose Him, but He chose them. This reflects the biblical theme of God’s sovereign initiative in salvation and calling. He also states that they were appointed to “go and bear fruit,” emphasizing that their lives are meant to produce lasting spiritual impact. This fruit includes both Christlike character and the multiplication of disciples. The promise that their fruit will remain points to the eternal significance of a life lived in obedience to Christ.

15:17. Jesus concludes by repeating the central command: “love one another.” This repetition emphasizes that love is not secondary but essential to the life and mission of His followers. Everything He has said—about friendship, obedience, and fruitfulness—flows back to this command. Love is both the evidence of abiding in Christ and the means by which His mission is carried forward in the world.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What does Jesus say about how and why His followers were chosen?
2. **Discuss.** What does it mean to “bear fruit that lasts,” and what might that look like in our lives?
3. **Discuss.** Where do you see God producing spiritual fruit in your life, your group, or your church?

4. **Deeper Dive.** How does knowing that Jesus chose and appointed you change the way you view your purpose and responsibility in His mission?
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Optional Activity (5 min)

Choose one of the following activities if time allows.

Option 1: Who's Your One?

Transition from Passage 2: "Jesus doesn't just define love; He calls us to live it out. Let's take a moment to think about what that looks like in our own lives."

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: Index cards (you can find these in the resource cart along with pens/pencils)

Instructions

Say:

Jesus says we are chosen and appointed to bear fruit—and that fruit often comes through loving others the way He loved us.

Then ask

- **Who is one person in your life right now that God may be calling you to intentionally love?**

Give them 30 - 60 seconds to think. Have them write their answer on an index card or put a task/reminder in their phone

Ask:

- **What would it actually look like to love that person the way Jesus describes in this passage?**

Examples:

- being intentional
- initiating conversation
- showing patience
- serving them
- sharing your faith

Invite pair sharing or 2-3 volunteers to share with the group

Final Question -

- **What is one specific step you could take this week to love that person more intentionally?**

Have them write their answer on an index card or put a task/reminder in their phone

Option 2: Song Reflection – “Friend of God” by Phillips, Craig & Dean

Transition from Passage 3: “We’ve seen that Jesus doesn’t just call us to love—He first calls us His friends and shows us what that love looks like. Let’s take a moment to reflect on that through this song.”

Time: 5–6 minutes

Supplies: Index Cards (you can find these in the resource cart along with pens/pencils)

Instructions

Play the song as a group (or read a portion of the lyrics). Have members write down what stands out to them as the song plays.

Then ask 1-2 of the questions below:

- What line from the song stood out to you the most, and why?
- How does this song help us understand what it means that Jesus calls us His friends?
- If Jesus truly is your friend, how should that shape the way you trust Him and live for Him?

Final Takeaway and Prayer

After discussion concludes, read the takeaway statement:

Because Jesus has loved us and called us His friends, we are sent to love others and bear fruit that lasts.

Either pray something like the guide below, or invite someone in the group to close in prayer.

Thank God for the intimate relationship He desires to have with each of us and for the privilege of being called His friend. Ask for wisdom to recognize the opportunities we have to love others the way Jesus loves us.