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In **:1-11** we looked at the 1<sup>st</sup>—our connection with Jesus. Abide in Him. He abides in us. It's a once-for-all issue and an everyday issue. If this area is hurting in your life, stop everything else you're doing and get it straightened out. In **:12-17**, we'll learn our unity with other believers and how that should show up with one another. We're commanded to agapē love each other!

**Read 15:12-17. :12 “This is My commandment, that you love (agapē) one another, just as I have loved you [love each other in the same way I've loved you].”** For the 2<sup>nd</sup> time that evening, Jesus gives this commandment (**13:34-35**). Only those who abide in Jesus and have Jesus abiding in them have the capacity to agapē love as He commands. The intimacy between Jesus and the believer is an intimacy which is to be shared with other believers. This is a love that looks to Jesus' love for its standard and example and depends on the indwelling Holy Spirit for its production (Gal. 5:16,22-23).

Agapē: the motivation must be “the highest, greatest good of the other person.” The two commandments that Jesus gave earlier included loving God with all we are and loving our neighbor as ourselves (**Mt. 22:37-40, Mk. 12:28-34**). Our examples are the Father and Jesus. He loves us as we are and not as we should be. This is the kind of love we are to demonstrate toward other believers, all of them! It begins with a decision, a decision to act for the benefit of someone else no matter what they're doing or how you feel. John wrote about this love in **1 Jn. 3:16: We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.** By the way, Christians' love for each other and our unity with one another are the Church's most powerful apologetics to the unbelieving world (13:35, 17:21). Who are those in your life who are making decisions about Jesus by what they see in your life or in the Church?

**:13 “Greater love has no one than this [There is no greater love than this] that one lay down his life for his friends (Grk. philos).”** We could also look at **Rom. 5:6-10, 1 Pet. 3:18, 1 Jn. 3:22-24, 4:7-11**. This verse previews the act of Jesus dying in the place of all humanity. Jesus loved us not because we were His friends; He loved us even when we were helpless, ungodly, sinners, enemies, and slaves of sin! Wow! Love shows up in the ‘one another’s’ in Scripture.

The Bible says we're to accept, admonish (counsel, warn), teach, bear one another's burdens, bear with, build up, care for, comfort, confess sins to, encourage, fellowship with one another. We're to forgive, honor, be hospitable to, humble ourselves to, be kind to, pray for, be at peace with, have the same mind toward, serve, show forbearance to, stimulate each other to love and good deeds, be subject to, be tenderhearted toward one another. For us

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So, “Their obedience will not be the uncomprehending submission of a slave. It will be the free obedience of one who is a friend of Jesus.” We trust Jesus and the Word to reveal our areas of unbelief, our areas of total honesty with Him. We trust Him to reveal our blind spots, where we aren't resting in Him. He uses the Spirit within and the Word to reveal those areas. See **Heb. 4:12-13**. Philos suggests a peer relationship. He shares with us the details and calls us to stand beside Him in accomplishing them. Relate to Jesus as a friend!

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Consider the impact of Jesus building into the lives of just a few men. Disciples normally chose the particular rabbi to whom they wanted to be attached, but He chose them, and for a purpose—the bearing of fruit,

especially love. Our confidence is based on the fact that the Father is the Vinedresser and Jesus is the Vine. He appointed them—set them apart for His special service. “Recruited, if you will, by Jesus Himself to be a part of what He is doing.” Jesus never calls us to a task that He does not give us the resources to fulfill it. Your fruit will last. Everything and anything in our lives that brings glory to the Father is Christian fruit (**15:8, Gal. 5:22-23**).

Pray in Jesus’ name: The effectiveness of prayer is linked to fruit bearing. We shouldn’t pray for things which we know will not bring glory to Jesus and His Father. Prayer must say: “Your will be done.” The glories of being a Christian: intimacy with Jesus, spiritual fruitfulness, loving association with other branches, productive prayer. We are chosen and appointed for obedience, to bear fruit. Let’s join Him in His mission. Jesus in **17:4** says, “Father, I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.” Our concern should be the same as Jesus’; His concern was that the Father be glorified! May that be true of us also.

**:17 “This I command you, that you love one another** [This is My command: love each other].” He says again, “Let one another love...!” This command to love one another is a transition between the Lord’s fruitfulness which He promised to His disciples in **:1-11** and His warning of the world’s hatred in **15:18-16:4**. In the midst of our fruitfulness and love for one another, we Christians must expect the hatred of the world. The world’s hatred is in contrast with how we should love others. Make sure any hatred is not Christian to Christian! In **15:18-6:4**, we’ll examine obstacles to our abiding in Jesus and loving one another, and, why the world hates us so much.

We have much to think about—our abiding in Jesus, our love for one another. As **1 Pet. 4:8** says, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another.” How does such love characterize your life? **Read 1 Pet. 4:7-11, Eph. 4:1-16, 1 Cor. 13:1-8a, and Rom. 12:3-13** for what will mark believers and churches who are abiding in Jesus and loving each other. Amazing!

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My love and prayers, Joel

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