



John 15:12 **This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. [13] Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. [14] Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. [15] Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.**

[16] Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. [17] These things I command you, that ye love one another.

A very long introduction.

Friendship is emphasized in this passage. First, the friendship of the disciples with the Lord. Then Jesus addresses the friendship that should exist between believers. Only Abraham was considered a “Friend of God” in the OT ([2 Chr 20:7](#), [Isa 41:8](#), [Ja 2:23](#)). All others were considered servants ([Deut 34:5](#); [Josh 24:29](#); [Ps 89:20](#); [Tit 1:1](#); [Ja 1:1](#)). Jesus uses this figure of friendship to illustrate a new dimension in the relationship of the disciples with Himself.

Holman¹ notes that believers need to fulfill Jesus’ command to demonstrate their love one for another just as God demonstrated His love for the sinner as noted in [Rom 5:8](#). We are commanded to *demonstrate* our love for each other. The objectivity of this demonstration is emphasized by “**...as I have loved you.**”

Friendship is reciprocal by definition. I don’t know of any earthly example that would explain the friendship that existed between God and Abraham but that doesn’t disprove the fact.

That is, we are not to put conditions on the demonstration of our love toward each other. The Holman makes the point that this command stands in precedence over other of his commands (pg 285). Regards the comments on pg 286, I am having difficulty with the quote from Carson - that there is no scripture verse anywhere saying that God or Jesus is a friend of anyone. Friendship is reciprocal by definition. I don’t know of any earthly example that would explain the friendship that existed between God and Abraham but that doesn’t disprove the fact. Since God said that Abraham was His friend, there has to be some extent where there was a reciprocal relationship between God and Abraham. Compare with the dialogue between the LORD and Abraham in [Gen 18:17 - 19](#). It does seem that the LORD had a particularly good connection with

¹ [HOLMAN NEW TESTAMENT Commentary](#), Max Anders General Editor and Kenneth O. Gangel, author.

Abraham and was inclined to share His plans with him. This should come as no surprise because Abraham was the one who believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness ([Gen 15:6](#)). It was Abraham through whom all families on earth would be blessed ([Gen 12:1 - 3](#)).² So friendship existed between Jesus and disciples and He welcomed it.³ Note [John 15:15](#) - this friendship involves sharing more of His thoughts with His friends - not a thing to be done with a mere servant. This not to say that, as Holman points out, the “chain of command” is to be violated. No. But neither does Jesus intend for His disciples to act out of blind allegiance or terror. Lenski makes a good point when he says that this is not a friendship between equals.⁴ He points out that He “condescends greatly when accepting them as friends.” Indeed, the disciples are lifted up greatly when they are accepted as friends of Jesus. Thus, their relationship as servants is not abolished, rather, their relationship takes on a new dimension - that of friendship. And so it is with us. So having made these comments let’s move on to an outline and more comments of verses 12 through 17.

1. The Requisite of Friendship - 12, 13.

(12) We do not have a choice with regard to other believers. We must extend the gracious invitation for friendship. We should care about other believers. If we do not, we are disobeying the Lord. Paul emphasizes this duty in his letter to the Romans ([Rom 12:10; 13:8](#)).

We are urged by Paul to have strong affections toward one another - even to the point of regarding others over ourselves.

This entails having kind thoughts towards each other - taking the time out to *think* of each other.

Paul teaches that we have no debt toward any legalistic requirements.

Rather, we *owe a debt to love each other*. Fulfillment of this debt is so valued by the Lord that it is to be considered fulfillment of the Law ([read verse 10](#)).

We are urged by Paul to have strong affections toward one another - even to the point of regarding others over ourselves. This entails having kind thoughts towards each other - taking the time out to *think* of each other.

To love as Jesus loved is more than an outward show of affection. Lenski points out that to love as Jesus loves is to see in others as Jesus sees them - to see the soul-needs as He sees. This means that we should be looking out for opportunities to be a blessing to our brothers and sisters in Christ - take the time

² I like the way the [Amplified](#) treats this. Families, in the sense of tribes, peoples, nations.

³ Read John [13:23; 19:26; 21:7; 21:20](#).

⁴ [THE INTERPRETATION OF ST. JOHN](#), Lenski, page 1050.

to care. Loving as Jesus loves sometimes entails unpleasantness. According to [Galations 6:1 - 3](#), when a brother or sister in Christ is flagging from their relationship with Christ, it might be necessary to administer some “tough love” on occasion in order to restore that brother or sister. But, my strong suggestion is that if we are showing proper brotherly love, things might not come to such a state - constant keeping in touch and supporting each other in prayer goes a long way by way of “preventative medicine.” Racing by each other in the church hallway with a “Hi! How’re you doing?” while not breaking our stride really doesn’t make for maintaining friendships. In any case, we need to be caring enough to take the time for establishing and maintaining friendship in the local church body.

(13) The proof of Jesus’ love for His friends was that He was willing to lay down His life for them *and, of course for us all*. Paul made a reference to this great love in [Romans 5:6 - 8](#) where the comparison of a man dying for another good man is universally regarded as an extreme sacrifice and love - such as a soldier dying in combat so that others might live - so that his country might continue on in freedom. Yet, Jesus died for us all when we had no possibility of loving Him in return. In fact, all of mankind were his enemies when He died for their sins. This wonderful example has also been demonstrated down through the centuries by the martyrdom of countless believers so that the gospel could be preached to oftentimes an unappreciative people.

2. The Responsibility of Friendship, 14.

Friendship with Christ is predicated on obedience to His commands, in fact according to Jesus’ statement here, we demonstrate our love with obedience. Let’s not forget the “chain of command.” I have already made reference to this. We should not forget that Jesus is our Lord and Master. As such, we need to understand that the Master/servant relationship still stands. I think the best way to look at verse 15 is that all believers have the added dimension of friendship with the Lord. The apostles

referred to this servant-relationship with the Lord in the following passages: [Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 7:22; 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 1:10; 4:7; Eph 6:5, 5; Phil 1:1; Col 4:12; Tit 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev 1:1](#). Note that in the Revelation passage that the purpose of revealing future

events unto Christ’s servants. So let’s not go off into the pucker-brush with a presumptuous “Jesus is my friend so I can do whatever I please attitude”. John was scared witless when he saw the vision of Jesus Christ on the isle Patmos. Nevertheless, Jesus knelt down and [touched John and told him not to be afraid](#). Such is our relationship with Him. He is holding nothing back as a Friend when it comes to knowing His word but we should not be presumptuous in this

Friendship with Christ is predicated on obedience to His commands, in fact according to Jesus’ statement here, we demonstrate our love with obedience. Let’s not forget the “chain of command.”

friendship.

3. The Advantage of Friendship, 15.

Paul pointed out that saints of the Old Testament longed to know the mind of Christ as believers are privileged to know in the church age. Friendship with God has the advantage of knowing His mind ([1 Cor 2:9 - 11](#)). And again, Christ pointed out that the prophets and righteous men longed to hear what we see and hear but did not ([Mat. 13:17](#)). This advantage allows the believer to be victorious in his spiritual struggle. In [Ephesians 6:10 - 18](#) the word-picture of the Roman soldier is used to show that the believer does have the equipment to be victorious - he does need to have the mind-set of the soldier, however and that requires preparation by daily study and application of the word of God and daily prayer seeking His direction and strength.

4. The Choice of Friendship, 16.

There are two lessons here: **first**, we were chosen - not the other way. We were chosen despite our sinful condition ([Rom 3:10 - 23](#)). We were chosen so that we might bear fruit. This brings to mind [Galations 5:22, 23](#). Again, our relationship with Christ will, of necessity, involve interaction of asking just as we do of our earthly friends. The saying "What are friends for" comes to mind.

...we should not be placing conditions on whom we choose for friendship. Graciousness in extending friendship to others is a Christ-like attitude.

Christ-like behavior is always the result of Christ's friendship. **Second**, we should extend God's choosing us despite our condition to other believers: we should not be placing conditions on whom we choose for friendship. Graciousness in extending friendship to others is a Christ-like attitude. The choice of friendship is that of the heart and of Christ's graciousness. Paul said in [Romans 15:7](#) that we should receive [and welcome] each other just as Christ received us.

5. The necessity of Friendship Reiterated, 17.

The display of friendship is key to the fellowship of the local body, to an intimate relationship with Christ ([vs 15](#)) and to demonstrate the love of Christ to the world ([John 13:35](#)). I have said this before: if we practice Christ's love on each other the world will take notice and many will be more open to the sharing of the gospel.