

## The Power to Love

**“This is my command: Love each other.” John 15:17**

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples just hours before his death on the cross. As he speaks them to me today, I am filled with eagerness to keep his command. Then discouragement washes over me. Jesus' words convict me of my failures: impatience with my husband, anger toward my beautiful child, irritation with fellow believers, avoidance of others who need my love. How can I possibly show true love, Christ-like love, in every circumstance, to everyone whom God has placed in my life?

Yet Jesus did not give this command without also making it possible for me—and for you—to fulfill it. Jesus spoke these words during his last Passover meal with his disciples, the night before his crucifixion. After having loved perfectly everyone he encountered throughout his life, he was about to show the world the extent of his love. He would be taking on himself all our failures to love, and paying for those sins on the cross. Now, through faith in Jesus, God sees in us not the failures, but rather Jesus' track record of perfect love. What a tremendous gift! Yet God gives us even more. We can love as Christ commanded, because we have the gift of God himself inside us, powerfully and wonderfully at work in our hearts.

Jesus' last conversation with his disciples assured both them and us that God, the source of our power to love, lives and works inside each believer. Jesus taught the disciples about the believer's intimate connection with all three Persons of the Trinity. Earlier in John 15, Jesus used the word picture of branches growing from a main vine to describe the connection of believers to himself. While the individual branch stays connected to the main vine, it naturally will bear fruit. We as branches *will* bear fruit—not by our own power, but by the power flowing to us from the main vine, Jesus. This includes the fruit of Christ-like love! In fact, we will bear “much fruit.” (Verse 5) Sisters, let us remember our intimate connection with our Savior, draw in the nourishment of the Word and sacraments, and joyfully anticipate the fruit that we are promised will develop in time.

Jesus also assured the disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit—the Counselor and Encourager. He told the disciples that the Holy Spirit “lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:17) This promise was fulfilled for the disciples at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit transformed the disciples from loveless deserters of Christ into bold lovers of God, distinguished from the rest of the world by their sacrificial love for one another and for those who hated them. Jesus' promise is fulfilled for us today, sisters in Christ. As we study the Word, the Holy Spirit comes to us and transforms us into bold lovers of Christ and of everyone God places in our lives.

Jesus' words provide even more encouragement. Jesus promised that he and the Father “will come to [the believer] and make our home with him.” (John 14:23) God does not stop by briefly to give us a little boost when he sees we are running on fumes. He has taken up permanent residence inside us! God's power is ours, every day, in every situation we face. It never runs out. It never fails. As Paul told believers in Philippians 2:13: “for it is God who works in you to

will and to act according to his good purpose.” Be encouraged, dear sisters! When we feel we have no strength and cannot manufacture a loving thought, let alone act accordingly, let us remember who resides in us. The almighty Creator of the universe even now is creating in us the desire to love others as Christ loved us. The Provider of everything necessary for the world's welfare even now is producing through us the acts of love that serve the needs of those around us.

Yes, we can love as Christ loved us. We can fulfill Jesus' final command before his death on the cross. The power for such constant, complete, and sacrificial love resides in us, because our God resides in us. Jesus assured his disciples of this truth in so many beautiful ways. Sisters, with boldness, with joy, with the power of our almighty, triune God working in us, let us love each other!

**Prayer:**

Dear Jesus, I confess to you my failures to love. I thank and praise you for your work of paying for all those failures, and loving perfectly in my place. I trust your promise that the Father will give me anything I ask in your name. I now pray for greater and greater Christ-like love in all my relationships. Work in me to bear more and more fruit, to your glory. In your saving name, I confidently pray. Amen.

**For Further Reading:**

John 15:1-17

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