

Session 5 Friendship with God: Glorious, Rare, & Costly (Jn. 15:14-15)

“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)

I. REVIEW: THE CONVINCING POWER OF HEROIC LOVE (JN. 15:13-14)

- A. Jesus identified laying down one’s life for another as the greatest expression of love (Jn. 15:13). Jesus’ love for us was publicly manifested by laying down His life for us on the cross to satisfy God’s justice (Rom. 3:26), to demonstrate that He desired that His Bride be with Him (Jn. 17:24), and to model the extravagant love that the Church would display for Him and for others at times throughout history and in an unprecedented way on a global scale in the final 3½ years of this age.
- ¹³***“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. 14You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (Jn. 15:13-15)***
- B. Jesus told them they would be His friends if they obeyed what He had just taught them (15:13-14).
- C. The end-time Church will love people extravagantly as Jesus did. The most extravagant kind of love is described in 15:13. The most convincing evidence of love is that love makes sacrifices for others. The issue of bloodshed magnifies the reality of love to others and awakens heroic love in many.
- ³⁴***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you...***
³⁵***By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn. 13:34-35)***
- D. **All will know:** Those displaying heroic love will clearly be identified as Jesus’ disciples (Jn. 17:23).
- ²³***“...they may be made perfect in one...that the world may know that You sent Me...” (Jn. 17:23)***
- E. On Tuesday of Jesus’ final week, He prophesied a time of unprecedented carnage (Mt. 24:22). The context for the display of extravagant love in the end-time Church will be the multi-faceted crisis in society resulting from food shortages caused by war and famine, or needs caused by earthquakes and tsunamis, or suffering related to human trafficking, orphans, or intense persecution.
- ⁷***“For nation will rise against nation...there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes...
⁹Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you; you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake...¹⁴This gospel of the kingdom will be preached...to all the nations, and then the end will come...²¹For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been...
²²And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [physically]...” (Mt. 24:7-22)***
- F. The shedding of blood is offensive, yet it has the most powerful social impact because it is so costly. Laying down one’s life for love is one of the most powerful weapons in the kingdom (2 Cor. 10:4). There will be unprecedented bloodshed at the end of the age (Rev. 6:8; 6:9-11; 16:4-6; 18:24; 19:2).
- ⁶***I saw the woman [Babylon], drunk with the blood of the saints...the martyrs of Jesus. (Rev. 17:6)***
- G. As crisis accelerates in the end times, many saints will arise in heroic love to help others, even when it is very costly and risks their lives. In this way, the love of Jesus will be seen by many people.

- H. We show the world what we think about Jesus and His leadership and who we are to Him by extravagantly giving our time, money, and possessions, and even risking our life—to express loyal love of Jesus—by being steadfast in persecution and sacrificial in the way we love others.
- ¹⁶By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 Jn. 3:16-17)*
- I. Jesus told them they would be His friends if they obeyed what He had just taught them (15:13-14). When the apostles were beaten, they considered it a great privilege to know the fellowship of His sufferings. The spirit of glory will rest on those who are persecuted for Jesus' sake (1 Pet. 4:14).
- ⁴¹ they [left]...rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)*
- ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings... (Phil. 3:10)*
- ²⁴I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church... (Col. 1:24)*
- J. Jesus prayed for mature love and unity in the church (Jn. 17:21-23). This will be witnessed by the world in context to the faithfulness of the end-time church. It will be the greatest social miracle in history. I refer to this as God's grand family plan. For God's people to be unified as the Father and Son are and for the world to be convince of it will require the Spirit releasing God's glory in and through multitudes of believers to empower them to walk in heroic love before the world.
- ²²And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³...that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them... (Jn. 17:22-23)*
- K. Israel's national salvation is connected to the fullness of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:25). God called the Church to stand with Israel in persecution as part of His plan *to provoke Israel to jealousy* by the love of God shown to them through Gentile believers walking in heroic love (Rom. 10:19; 11:11).

II. THE NATURE AND QUALITIES OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

- A. A friendship is a relationship between two people who have a bond of mutual affection, enjoyment, trust, and support. True friendship is one of the greatest gifts in life. Everyone needs friendships.
- ¹⁸...God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper..." (Gen. 2:18)*
- B. Loyal friendship includes contending for each other's destiny, honor, and family blessing.
- ¹⁰Love...with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (Rom. 12:10; ESV)*
- C. *Friends are trustworthy*: They are trustworthy in how they act and in what they say. They uphold their stated values and commitments; thus, you can believe in them even when you do not understand what they are doing. They keep their promises to you.
- ¹⁷A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. (Prov. 17:17)*

- D. **Friends have compassion and empathy:** Friends stand with one another in difficult circumstances including spiritual struggles and failures. They seek to understand what their friends are feeling and then respond accordingly. They speak words which strengthen their friends.

²*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2)*

- E. **Friends are honest:** They speak honestly to those they love about blind-spots in their character or plans. They do not speak with deceptive flattery. They tell you what you need to hear in a way that you can hear it instead of gossiping about you. Friends give their real opinion in seeking to be helpful even when it disagrees with their friends.

⁵*Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend... (Prov. 27:5-6)*

¹⁵*...speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him... (Eph. 4:15)*

- F. **Friends are loyal:** They stand up for you and contend for your honor and goodness. They don't speak negatively about you behind your back. They listen to your side of the story, give you the benefit of the doubt, and seek to defend you to others. Your friend has your back!

⁸*Above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. 4:8)*

²⁸*A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends. (Prov. 16:28)*

- G. **Friends delight in mercy:** Your secret is safe with them, so you can be open and vulnerable. A friend never uses the private information about a friend against them or in a way to hurt them.

¹⁸*Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity...because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)*

- H. **Friends spend quality time together:** Money is power, but "time is life."

III. FRIENDS OF GOD IN THE SCRIPTURES: JOHN THE BAPTIST, ABRAHAM, MOSES

- A. John the Baptist's life is the model of friendship with God. John described his ministry and lifestyle as a friend of the Bridegroom—comparable to the best man in a wedding who does not seek to draw the bride's attention to himself but prepares her to receive the embrace of the Bridegroom.

²⁹*...but the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice...this joy of mine is fulfilled. (Jn. 3:29)*

1. **Who stands:** He was diligent to stand in God's presence in prayer, feeding on the Word.
2. **Who hears him:** He was faithful to respond with obedience regardless of the price.

- B. Jesus described John as having a burning heart and a shining lamp of ministry that clearly and boldly made known God's ways and exposed misunderstanding about Jesus. He brought together the forerunner lifestyle (burning heart) with the forerunner message (lamp).

³⁵*He was the burning [heart] and shining lamp [ministry]... (Jn. 5:35)*

- C. Abraham was called “the friend of God” who believed in God’s delayed promises.
⁸“*But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob...the descendants of Abraham My friend.* (Isa. 41:8)
²³*Abraham believed God, and...he was called the friend of God.* (Jas. 2:23)
²⁰*He [Abraham] did not waver at the promise of God...giving glory to God,²¹and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.* (Rom. 4:20-21)
- D. Moses received direct communication with God “as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11)
¹¹*So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.* (Ex. 33:11)

IV. GOD’S SIDE OF THE FRIENDSHIP: HOW HE FEELS AND WHAT HE DOES

- A. How does God feel and what does He do in His friendship with His people? Jesus will tell us things about our destiny that the Father has planned. This is one aspect of the prophetic spirit.
¹⁵*...I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known...* (Jn. 15:15)
- B. Jesus will entrust the secrets of His heart to His friends in this age and throughout eternity.
¹⁴ *The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him...* (Ps. 25:14)
- C. John positioned himself to receive the “secrets” of Jesus’ heart. This involves seeking insight into what is near and dear to God’s heart, enabling us to relate to and partner with Him in a greater way.
²⁰*The disciple who...said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” (Jn. 21:20)*
- D. Jesus as our friend rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). He understands all aspects of our life that are unknown, unnoticed, and misunderstood by others.
¹⁵*Rejoice with those who rejoice...weep with those who weep...* (Rom. 12:15)
1. *He celebrates with us in our victories.* He alone knows our true greatness and sees the heights of our nobility in redemption. He rejoices and celebrates with our triumphs.
 2. *He know our deepest desires.* He knows the depths of our longings, dreams, and intentions to love Him and to help others—even when we fail to walk them out.
 3. *He honors our sacrifices.* There are heroic sacrifices of love that we occasionally make out of our love for Him. We have joy, knowing that He recognizes these as love for Him.
 4. *He understands our pain.* Jesus sees our pain and walks with us through difficulties, disappointments, and setbacks physically, financially, socially, and spiritually.
 5. *He helps us in our struggle with sin.* He walks with us through every season of life, including our sin. He forgives us and understands our struggle and pain when we fail. He understands our shame and our frame (Ps. 103:14). He protects and covers us by not disclosing the majority of our sin. He knows our failures yet treats us with honor.