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John 15:9-17

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. **16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last.** Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

INTRO - I am told there are magazines that are full of quizzes, quizzes on love and relationships. How about these questions? How would you answer? “I love my neighbor as I love myself?” “I obey God in all his laws and calls for righteousness?” I expect some may say yes to the first question, I love my neighbor as I love myself. Very few would say yes to the second, “I obey God in all his laws and calls for righteousness?”

I. It is important to know the commands of God for His people.

A. In verse 10 Jesus says, “**10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love**”

1. Some may ask, so, do I have to obey God to receive His love?
2. In honest consideration, when God calls for satisfaction, not greed, faithful marriages and not adultery or lust, regular worship and honoring God’s word, not just one item on my list of priorities, when God calls for our mouths to honor and respect him and others, and not to speak carelessly, or with gossip, most would say, I haven’t obeyed God.
3. When we know that Jesus says in Matthew 5, “Be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect,” then all would say they haven’t kept God’s law.

B. But, keeping God’s law is loving God, and loving others. In our lesson for today Jesus says, **12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.**

1. When I am giving, and patient, and kind, and forgiving, when I am loving to my neighbor, then I am keeping God’s command.
2. We know the blessing of receiving love.
3. We would all like to be able to love our neighbor.

II. When husbands and wives are married they make vows. I think I’ve performed between 200 and 300 weddings in 30 years. Couples vow to love, honor, serve, and cherish one another. They promise to remain faithful till death parts them. So, ask someone who has been married 50 years if they have always kept these promises. Even in very healthy happy marriages, every person will have to admit there are times they failed to be able to keep their promises. I admit the same.

A. We may know we can’t always obey God, but some might think they are nonetheless loving.

1. Listen again to what Jesus says for His people about love.
2. First he says, **12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.** We might think we can love like that.
3. But then Jesus says, **13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.**
4. Can you do that? Do you love others to the point of being willing and able to lay your life down for them?

B. It is rare, but it has been done.

1. For years Sandy Proetz struggled with kidney problems. Do you know that two of her relatives were willing to give one of their kidneys for her. That is truly love. Such love honors the person, and honors God. But, such love is not easy.
2. In our own congregation we have 3 members in Iraq and Afghanistan. We pray for their safety. But some have knowingly served and willingly given their lives for their country, and thus their families and friends. Such love honors

others who are loved, and honors our Lord. But, such love is NOT easy.

C. Since God's demand is perfection, we know we have not always loved as we should, and we have fallen short of God's demands.

III. Last week my mother in law passed away. We got lots of cards of sympathy and support. A number of those cards commended my wife for taking good care of her mom in her later years, which she did. But, while some of the individual jobs were time consuming and difficult, like government paperwork, for Kathy the task of loving her mom was easy. It wasn't so much a choice, but a response. Kathy's mom had done such a good job of raising and loving her children, we would not have wanted to do anything else. Kathy wanted to take on these difficult jobs, in response to her mother's love.

A. Now listen to the words of Jesus.

1. And, as we have already heard, in verse 12 Jesus says, **12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.**

- a. Do you know how Jesus loved us?
- b. We were sinners, but He came and lived a perfect life for us.
- c. We rejected his call to obedience, but He died on the cross to forgive us.
- d. We deserve punishment and death, and Jesus offers eternal life.

B. And this is not just a general impersonal love.

1. In verse 16, Jesus says, **You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last.**

2. Today in baptism Jesus did for Lisa, and Skye, and Sasha, and Cheyenne what he has done for us. He has personally called us by name to receive His grace and forgiveness and love.

3. Today in the Lord's Supper Jesus calls failed sinners like us, to "Take and Eat, Take and drink, this is my body and blood shed for the forgiveness of your sins.

4. Jesus chose flawed people like us, who have not always obeyed, and not always loved, and chosen us to receive His love and serve Him.

C. So, because Jesus loves us, when we realize we don't deserve it, and realize the depth of his love, we want to serve Him.

1. We are led by His love to love him, and want to serve Him.
2. Since he says that His command is to love one another, we are led to even want to obey him.
3. The forgiveness and love of Jesus changes lives.

CONCLUSION - When a couple has been married for 30 or 40 or 50 years, if one person in a time of stress says unkind and unloving words, usually they don't say, "Ok, it's over." A healthy relationship confesses sin, forgives sin, and continues to work to love one another in spite of failure.

In our relationship with God, while we may fail at times to love and obey him, and fail at times to love others, He never fails. He called us. He died for us. He rose for us. He continues to love us.

So, when you fail, don't give up. Jesus says, **Love each other as I have loved you.** Jesus love doesn't fail, we can keep working to love Him, obey Him, and to love others.

A group of professional people posed this question to a group of 4 to 8-year-olds, "What does love mean?" The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think:

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."
Rebecca - age 8

THANKS Kristin
 Cherie Dittmer

GRIEVING Rockeys at Death of Alice Tobin

ILL Ron McNeese
 Judy Burke
 Dave Miranda
 Pat Mills Mary C.'s mom
 Mary Richards
 all on our hearts

TROUBLE families
 Country
 Serving
 Peter
 Kathryn
 Zach