

John 15: Jesus' “Viability” Theology

The “Relationship” Paradigm

John 15.12-14

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Now remain in my love.

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.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you
and that your joy may be complete.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that
he lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command.

The Defining “Discipleship” Command

“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (13.33-34)

- ❖ Jesus gave many instructions to his disciples; his “Kingdom Sermon” (*Matthew 5-7*) defines what it means to be his follower and do his Father’s will in contrast to prevailing principles of successful living. But even as all the Law and Prophets hang on the “love commandments” (*Matthew 22.37-40*), so everything about being a follower of Christ rests on this command: “Love each other *as* I have loved you.”
- ❖ “As” the Father, so was Jesus; “as” Jesus, so must his disciples be. Substitute definitions are contradictory, self-revealing, and not the fruit of the True Vine.

A Greater “Life-Laying-Down” Love

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 PETER 4.8

- ❖ This has not, and will not, be a memorable night for the disciples; they let their Master wash their feet, then argued who was the greatest among them; they pledged undying loyalty even as one left to betray him and the actions of the others would reveal overt self-concern and a complete lack of fidelity. Still, Jesus declared his intention to lay down his life for them because they were his friends.
- ❖ They were his friends because he had chosen them, not because they met a set of qualifications. Love—his love—is not revocable when one fails. It is a *greater* love.

The “Relationship” Paradigm

“You are my friends if you do what I command.”

Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?

AMOS 4.4

- ❖ We have already seen that Jesus isn’t saying that he will “unlove” us, or in this case, “unfriend” us, if we fall short. Rather, it is a matter of what paradigm we embrace: will it be one that is self-accommodating or will it be his paradigm of surrender, dependency, and fully identifying with him as my all? Adopting a standard for myself that is less costly is incompatible with Jesus; I simply can’t be in relationship with him while retaining a certain independence as the branch. *Relationship requires compatibility* (see 2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1). I must walk as he walked and love as he loved—then there will be compatibility and fellowship (see 1 John 1.6-7).