



The Gospel of John

Session 29: Jesus's Teachings at the Last Supper, Part 1

THE LESSON AT A GLANCE

John 14–17 is one of the longest teachings of Jesus recorded in Scripture, surpassed only by the Sermon on Mount in Matthew 5–7. Over the next four Sundays in John's Gospel, we'll examine Jesus's final words to His disciples before His arrest and crucifixion. Jesus taught on heaven, prayer, the Holy Spirit, and unity among believers. He also gave the final two "I am" statements: "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and "I am the vine."

In today's text, Jesus gave the disciples a new commandment: Love one another. Love is the defining attribute of God's character (1 John 4:8), and the way in which the world will know we belong to Christ.

Jesus also prepared the disciples to carry out His mission of love beyond His death. The ministry of Jesus was not ending, but it was expanding and every believer is called to be a part of it.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURES

John 13:31-35; 14:1-14

THE MAIN IDEA

Jesus gave a new command and revealed the way to the Father, assuring believers of their eternal home with Him.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

What are you tempted to prioritize over growing your love for God and for others?

SCRIPTURE IN CONTEXT

John 13:31-35 As Jesus prepared for His imminent arrest and crucifixion, He left the disciples with a new command—love one another. This command came with an important purpose: The world will know we are followers of Jesus by how well we love each other. As we reflect on this passage, consider ways in which your relationship with other Christians points non-believers to Christ, or away from Him. How might Christ be challenging you in loving others in His name?

John 14:1-11 Even though Jesus was returning to the Father, it was for a greater purpose—securing a place for believers to live with God forever. The cross was the price to make a way for sinful man to dwell with God. Jesus declared that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Him. The invitation to come to God through Christ is for anyone who calls on His name.

John 14:12-14 Jesus told the disciples they would do even greater works than He, and He encouraged them to pray boldly in His name.



START HERE

Across cultures and throughout time, humans have invested staggering amounts of wealth into building places meant to last and exhibit wealth—whether homes to live in now or “eternal” dwelling places of memorial. For many, where a person lives, or where they are buried, speaks to their wealth, status, and style.

However, Scripture makes clear no matter how ornate or costly, no earthly dwelling will ever be our true home. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus's shifted the disciples' perspective from earthly security to eternal reality. He spoke not of monuments or cathedrals built by human hands, but of an eternal dwelling place prepared by divine love. In these final teachings, Jesus not only revealed the pathway to eternal life in Him, but He gave them a command on how we should live with one another on earth as we await our heavenly home.

DISCUSS

What was a “must have” on your last home search? In what ways has God challenged your perspective that earthly dwellings will bring full satisfaction?

REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE TEXT

1. Love is the mark of those who belong to Jesus.

John 13:31-35: *When he had left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’”*

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Unpacking John 13:31-35

The Taj Mahal, commissioned in 1632 by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, stands as one of the most recognizable structures, and symbols of love, in the world. After his wife, Mumtaz Mahal, died in childbirth with their 14th child, Jahan dedicated the next twenty years of his life to completing a monument in her honor.

By contrast, Jesus did not go to prepare a place for the dead, rather to prepare a place for us to dwell with God forever. As He spoke about His coming death, burial, and resurrection, He left His disciples one final commandment: Love one another. For believers, love does not end with death. Through Christ, we will love God and one another for all eternity.



After Judas left the group to betray Jesus (vv. 26-30), Jesus spoke to the remaining eleven disciples. The time had come for His arrest. Jesus said, *"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once"* (vv. 31-32). Notice how Jesus used the word *"glorify"* five times in these two short verses. *Doxazo*, "to glorify," means to praise, extol, magnify, or celebrate. This term also means to clothe with splendor, impart glory, and render it excellent. As Jesus glorifies the Father, the Father glorifies the Son.

You might recall that in John 12, when Jesus predicted His death he cried, *"Father, glorify your name."* God audibly spoke from heaven, saying, *"I have glorified it, and will glorify it again"* (John 12:28). The cross was the ultimate way Jesus glorified the Father, by completely obeying and surrendering Himself to the Father's plans. In a similar way, we glorify God with our lives when we joyfully and willingly surrender to the Father's will. As John Piper has repeatedly said, *"God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him."*

"Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'" (John 13:33). The word Jesus used here translated, "little children" (*teknion*), designates a tender relationship between a teacher and His disciples. John the apostle, perhaps taken with the kind way Jesus spoke to them, used the term seven more times in his letter 1 John. *"See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children—and we are!"* (1 John 3:1) We are *"little children"* because God is our Father. The apostle John couldn't get over it, and we shouldn't either. To be a child of God is to rest in our relationship with Him forever.

Also in verse 33, Jesus told the disciples He was going away. They would look for Him but not be able to find Him. Jesus meant the disciples could not follow Him to death on the cross.

Jesus had previously used this same phrase, *"Where I am going you cannot come,"* with unbelieving Jewish leaders, but for a vastly different reason. The Jewish leaders could not come because they refused to come to God through faith in Christ. Jesus had said, *"I'm going away; you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come"* (John 8:21).

However, as Jesus later explained to His disciples in John 14:3, He was going away so that they *could* come. The Pharisees rejected Christ and died in their sins, but His followers receive His work on the cross and gain access to the Father. The disciples could not follow Jesus to the cross, but they would follow Him by way of the cross into their eternal home with the Father.

Jesus's love for us is unchanging and sacrificial. As He prepared to leave the disciples, He commanded that they love one another in the same way. When the apostle John reflected on this kind of love, he later wrote, *"This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters"* (1 John 3:16). When the apostle Paul reflected on Christ's love and our command, he said, *"If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any*



affection and mercy, make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:1-4).

We are called to have the same love as Christ for Christ, but also for others. The command to love is not merely a vertical commandment, showing us how to fix our affections on Christ, but also a horizontal love, calling us to demonstrate the love we have received from God and outwardly expressing that love to others. Jesus's final commandment mirrors His teaching on the Greatest Commandment: love God and others (Matthew 22:36-40).

DISCUSS

- *How is our love for one another in the church meant to point outsiders to Jesus?*
- *How does Jesus's definition of love differ from cultural or sentimental ideas of love?*
- *Where is God calling you to demonstrate sacrificial love in a tangible way this week?*

2. Jesus is the only way to the Father, and the One who prepares our eternal home.

John 14:1-11: “Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way to where I am going.”

“Lord,” Thomas said, “we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

“Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that’s enough for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.”

Unpacking John 14:1-11

Antila, the private residence of Mukesh Ambani of India, is valued at between \$2–4 billion. It is often regarded as the most expensive private residence in the world. With 27 floors, a helipad,



spa, and even a room that manufactures snow, Antila represents a crowning achievement in architectural ambition.

Yet, even a home as lavish as Antila is a temporary, limited dwelling place that will pale in comparison to what Christ is preparing for us in eternity—a dwelling place that will not be measured by floors, swimming pools, or resell value—but by eternal proximity to the Father.

“Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1). In a worldly sense, the disciples had much to fear. They knew the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus. They knew He was betrayed by Judas, and they heard Jesus tell them He would be killed. And yet, Jesus told them to not be troubled. How? *“Believe in God; believe also in me.”* These disciples, all Jews, had likely believed in God their entire lives. They attended the festivals with their families and grew up worshiping in the temple and synagogues. Over the three years they walked with Jesus, they had come to believe in Him as the Messiah (John 6:68-69).

Belief is the anecdote to fear. When Jarius’s daughter died before Jesus reached the house, Jesus told him, *“Don’t be afraid. Only believe”* (Mark 6:36). When Christ came to the disciples, walking on the water in a storm he said, *“Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid”* (Matthew 14:27). Even King David, when he was running from the Philistines, connected faith with decreasing fear. *“When I am afraid, I will trust in you In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”* (Psalm 56:3-4). As Jesus prepared the disciples for the inevitability of the cross, He reminded them that they believed in God; they could also believe in Him.

“In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way to where I am going” (John 14:2-4). Believing in Jesus means believing in His promises. Jesus assured the disciples that this separation would not last forever. He was going (the way of the cross) to make a place for them in eternity with the Father. The same promise is true for us. The only way we have access to heaven is through Jesus. Not only was Jesus making a way, but He would return to take them to heaven.

The cross’s power is proved in Christ’s bodily resurrection. Without the resurrection, Jesus would be another dead prophet. Because of the resurrection, Jesus proved His power over death and demonstrated His divinity. Jesus emphasized that believing in Him is the way to where He was going. *“Believe in me”* (v. 1) and *“you know the way”* are intrinsically combined; belief in Jesus is the way to eternal life with the Father.

This teaching was hard for the disciples to comprehend. First, Thomas asked the question, *“Lord . . . we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?”* Though Jesus had repeatedly predicted His death (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:7-8; 12:23-33; John 13:1), the disciples still struggled to grasp the implication of His words.



Jesus reassured the disciples and gave us His sixth *"I am"* statement: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6a). Jesus is the way: the path, the traveled way, and the road to eternal life. Jesus is the truth: Unlike Satan, who is called the "father of lies" (John 8:44), Jesus spoke truth in all things. He fulfilled what David wrote, *"The LORD is faithful in all his words and gracious in all his actions"* (Psalm 145:13). We can trust His instructions about heaven and eternal life, because He always speaks truth. Finally, He is the absolute fullness of life on earth, and the way to eternal life in Him.

Jesus continued, *"No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6b). There are those who would say that Jesus's statement is exclusionary: He is the only way to the Father. His claim is exclusive, because He is the only One who could accomplish salvation for us, and the only One raised to life again. Jesus is the one way to the Father. But it is extraordinary that God gave us a way to return to Him at all! Now, with Jesus as the one way, God has opened heaven to all people who come through Jesus. *"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"* (Romans 10:13). God's offer of salvation is available for all who will receive it.

Timothy Keller, in his book, *The Reason for God*, wrote, "If Jesus is not the only way to God, then He is not a way to God at all." Only Jesus could make a claim like, *"No one comes to the Father except through me."* That is why He is worthy of our worship. Jesus is the only way to the Father and the one who prepares our eternal home.

Still, the disciples struggled to understand. Just as Thomas wanted to know the way, Philip wanted to see the Father. *"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us"* (John 14:8). Philip wanted to see with his eyes what his heart believed. You might recall in Exodus 33 Moses made a similar request: *"Show me your glory."* God responded to Moses's request by showing him His back, saying, *"You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live"* (Exodus 33:18-19).

For Thomas, however, Jesus had a different answer:

"Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves" (John 14:9-11). Jesus is the exact representation of the Father (Colossians 1:15). To see Jesus is to see the Father, just as Jesus declared, *"I and the Father are one"* (John 10:30). If we want to know what God is like, we need only to look to the Son.

John previously explained the relationship between Jesus and the Father this way: *"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known"* (John 1:18). Jesus made known the Father, because He is united with the Father. This is good news for us today. We do not have to wonder about the



nature of God. Jesus reflects God's character perfectly. Just as Jesus told Philip, "The Father who lives in me does his works" (v. 10).

Jesus reassured the disciples about their future. He promised them a place forever with He and the Father. In the last few verses of this text, we'll see the last promise Jesus made them that would only be fulfilled after His death, burial, and resurrection.

DISCUSS

- *What did Jesus say about His relationship with the Father?*
- *Why is the exclusivity of Jesus as "the Way" difficult for many people to accept?*
- *How does the promise of an eternal home reshape your view of success, security, or comfort?*

3. Prayer in Jesus's name reflects trust in the Father's purposes.

John 14:12-14: *"Truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."*

Unpacking John 14:12-14

In first-century Jewish culture, a groom often prepared a place for his bride by adding onto his father's home, sometimes called an insula. After the proposal, the bride waited in her parents' home until the groom returned for her once the place was ready. This cultural picture echoed Jesus's promise: He would prepare a place and return for His people. In the meantime, they were not abandoned. They were invited into an active relationship with God through prayer.

As Jesus prepared for His imminent arrest and crucifixion, He wanted the disciples to understand He was not disbanding them in anticipation of His departure. Rather, He instructed them to continue to do the works He prepared for them to do. Much like the sending of the 12 on their first missionary journey in Luke 9, or even the sending of the 72 in Luke 10, Jesus wanted them to continue to *"proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick"* (Luke 9:2). In fact, Jesus insisted that the disciples would do even greater works than He because He was returning to the Father.

You might wonder how any disciple could do greater works than Jesus. It is helpful to think of this impact as greater in number and in geographic region than in miracles or power. As Paul wrote, *"What do you have that you didn't receive [from God]?"* (1 Corinthians 4:7). Consider this—when Peter preached the first sermon on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came on Him and the others, more people likely came to faith that day than in Jesus's entire earthly ministry (Acts 2:41). When Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), who church history says carried the good news of Jesus to Africa, the gospel spread beyond Palestine,



something that had not happened during Jesus's earthly ministry. Their impact was greater in reach than Jesus's earthly ministry, but it was completely empowered by the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent. Through the disciples, Jesus's ministry multiplied, a work of the Holy Spirit that continues today and will continue until Christ returns for His church.

In verses 13-14, Jesus made a provocative claim: *"Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."* These verses have been the source of unhealthy teaching throughout church history. The real key to understanding these verses lies in the phrase, *"so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."* Jesus promises to answer "yes" to those prayers that glorify the Father and are asked by nature of the believer's relationship with the Son. That is not to say, however, that adding *"in Jesus's name"* to the end of a prayer is a magical password to get Jesus to do anything what we want.

Praying in Jesus's name means praying in alignment with the nature of Christ. John Piper said, *"To pray in Jesus's name means to pray on the basis on who He is and what He has done, seeking what He seeks."* When we seek the Lord, then we begin to want the things the Lord wants. Prayers that emanate from a relationship with Jesus where we want what He wants are the kinds of prayers He loves to answer with "yes."

Jen Wilkin wrote, *"Prayer is not a means by which we bend God's will to ours, but a means by which He bends our will to His."* John wrote in 1 John 5:14-15, *"This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him."*

The apostle James warned about the fruitlessness of praying for our own selfish motives: *You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures* (James 4:3). Asking God for what we want for our own gain does not glorify God. Rather, our prayers should seek to glorify God and demonstrate trust in His ability to give us what we need.

In Matthew 7, Jesus taught the disciples what a prayer of faith looks like. He said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him"* (Matthew 7:7-11).

Talking to God in prayer is a privilege of being His children, and a way we demonstrate trust in Him. As we await the day when we will be with Him forever, we seek Him through prayer. Just as Jesus wanted the disciples to pray for all their needs, we can and should take our needs to God in prayer and in Jesus's name.



DISCUSS

- *What promise did Jesus give regarding prayer?*
- *How might you have misunderstood what it means to pray "in Jesus's name" in the past?*
- *What is one specific prayer you can begin to pray in alignment with Jesus's purposes this week?*

DEEPER FOCUS

REFLECT ON THE TEXT

DISCUSS

- *How did Jesus define love in John 13:34-35?*
- *What did Jesus promise about the future He was preparing?*
- *Why is it essential to understand Jesus as the only way to the Father?*
- *How should the promise of answered prayer shape the way we pray?*

RESPOND TO THE TEXT

Re-read John 13:34-35. What are you currently tempted to prize over growing in love for the Father and others?

APPLY

Re-read John 14:6-7. Where do you need to realign your life with Jesus as the way to the Father?

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