



GROWTH GROUPS WEEK 2

WEEK OF APRIL 30TH

Spring 2017

GROWTH GROUP SPRING 2017

WEEK 2 – APRIL 30, 2017 - JOHN 15:9-17

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) Share a time when you had to serve others. Did you serve willingly or begrudgingly?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

John 15 begins with the discussion of Jesus being the vine and his followers being the branches. As this line of thinking continues, Jesus moves to talking about God's love and the way in which his followers are to love others. Discipleship is based on obedience to God and loving the people around you. Bearing fruit means loving others as God has loved us, and the only way we can bear fruit is by abiding in Jesus.

When Jesus talks about joy in the gospel of John it is usually in the context of his own departure from this world. In doing this he wants to encourage his disciples not to fear the future, but to rejoice in what he is accomplishing. If his followers can glimpse God's perspective on the death of Jesus then hopefully they can see their own pain and loss in light of God's perspective. They can find joy even in the midst of adversity and difficulty.

Because the disciples have been loved unconditionally by Jesus, they also ought to love one another. They are to follow the example of Jesus. Verse 14 tells us that obedience to the commands of Jesus is what defines being his friend. In the Old Testament being a "friend of God" is a description used to talk about the obedience of Abraham and Moses.

Obedience to Jesus is expected of Jesus' friends. Jesus had called them and chosen them for a specific purpose. It is important to remember that this calling was not about privilege. Rather, it was a calling into fruitfulness.

The disciples "knew" God's will. Because they had been friends with Jesus, they had the opportunity to learn what God wanted them to do and how they were to "bear fruit" in their community. Jesus also reminds them that they need to be people of prayer. As they follow after God closely and get to know him intimately, they will then know how they should be praying.



EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read John 15:9-17 (From the Phillips Translation)

"I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. You must go on living in my love. If you keep my commandments you will live in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and live in his love. I have told you this so that you can share my joy, and that your happiness may be complete. This is my commandment: that you love each other as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this—that a man should lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I tell you to do. I shall not call you servants any longer, for a servant does not share his master's confidence. No, I call you friends, now, because I have told you everything that I have heard from the Father. "It is not that you have chosen me; but it is I who have chosen you. I have appointed you to go and bear fruit that will be lasting; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

- 2) What kind of love exists between God and Jesus? If God loves us in the same way that he loves Jesus, how have you experienced God's love?
- 3) How is "keeping God's commandments" a form of showing love?
- 4) How do discipline and obedience relate to happiness and joy? Is there a difference between joy and happiness? How do we achieve true joy?
- 5) *"This is my commandment: that you love each other as I have loved you."* Is this a call to make and protect loving friends?
- 6) *"You are my friends if you do what I tell you to do."* sounds like a "transactional" process. Do you think God's love is based on our obedience or on His grace? Explain.
- 7) *"I shall not call you servants any longer, for a servant does not share his master's confidence. No, I call you friends, now, because I have told you everything that I have heard from the Father."* discusses the differences between servants and friends. Who do you share everything with?
- 8) Do you have one or two genuine friends? What makes that friendship special?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 9) Think of the process of bearing, nurturing and harvesting fruit from trees. How does knowing you are chosen by God and following his commandment to love one another lead to bearing "fruit that lasts"?