

Jesus' Love Language

John 14:15-24

Years ago Gary Chapman wrote a book entitled *The Five Love Languages*. The idea is rather simple. Each of us speaks a primary language (English, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, French, etc.). You will probably be most comfortable and most expressive in your primary language. Similarly, each of us has a primary love language - a primary way in which we tend to express and receive love.

Chapman identifies five of these love languages: words, time, touch, gifts, and service. Sometimes you'll be around a family that hugs a lot (e.g. when you show up and when you leave). Touch is probably a primary love language in that family. Another family's primary love language is gift-giving; every person in the family gives every other person in the family a gift at Christmas, at birthdays, at anniversaries, etc.

Chapman points out that in a marriage you need to speak the love language of your spouse. If you don't understand and speak the other person's love language, you may **think** you're showing love but you're really not. In my marriage, generally speaking, doing the dishes and vacuuming the carpet expresses love to Brenda more than spending our hard-earned money on gifts. This doesn't mean that she never wants gifts, but her primary love language is service; she feels loved when I serve her. If you want someone to feel loved, you need to speak his/her love language.

Today we are going to talk about Jesus' love language - what really communicates to Jesus, "I love you." This is really important because it's possible that we **think** we're expressing love to Him when we're really not. It's not enough merely to think we're loving Jesus; true disciples of Jesus actually want to love Him.

Today as we continue our study in the Farewell Discourse, we are going to consider a passage in which Jesus toggles back and forth between statements about loving Him and statements about His personal presence in our lives. When we put it together we'll conclude that through Jesus' presence in our lives through the Holy Spirit gives us the capacity to speak His love language. Let's look first at Jesus' simple statement in John 14:15.

We love Jesus by keeping His commandments. (John 14:15, 21, 23-24)

15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

If you were to ask Jesus, "What is it that really communicates love to You?" this is what He'd say: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Jesus wants us to know His "love language." [When you think about it, this is at the heart of the Great Commission. Jesus said to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all He's commanded us. Or, based on this verse, the Great Commission is about "teaching them to love [Jesus]."]

When you think about it, Jesus is the only Person who can say this. I could never tell my wife, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." You wouldn't say that to a friend; human friendships are based on give-and-take and deferring to the other person. Your employer wouldn't say this to you. An employer would say, "If you value your job, you will keep my commands." Similarly, a government would say, "If you want to avoid a hefty fine or avoid being thrown in jail, you will keep my commandments." Only Jesus can say, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments," because He is Lord and Savior.

Jesus isn't saying that we earn God's favor by keeping His commandments. He isn't saying that we merit grace by keeping His commandments. But He is saying that the way we say, "Jesus, I love You," is by doing the things He commanded. It's good to know what He commanded, it's good to talk about what He commanded, and it's good to teach what He commanded. But we show Jesus love by **doing** what He commanded.

So if you want an honest assessment of your love for Jesus, evaluate how you're doing in various areas of obedience. If you're like me, you hear this and your mind immediately gravitates toward areas of disobedience, as if Jesus is mainly wanting us to feel crummy by saying, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." But there's no evidence Jesus is doing that here.

If you're a believer in Jesus, you should be able to identify areas of obedience - ways in which you really speak Jesus' love language. For example, I've got a friend who's a real "peacemaker." He never growls or snarls or bites; he's able to bring peace to situations in which others tend to take sides and get upset. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mt. 5:9). I really believe that Jesus feels loved by the way this friend lives out what Jesus taught. You should be able to identify ways in which you love Jesus. Don't be too afraid of being puffed up with pride by noticing your own obedience. It's okay to realize that there are ways in which you love Jesus.

On the other hand, there will also be areas of your life in which you realize, "I'm not really keeping Jesus' commands, and so in this area of my life I'm not really loving Jesus as I should." For example, we saw a few weeks back that Jesus has commanded us, "Love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34). This may be hard to hear, but we're fooling ourselves if we say, "I love Jesus, but I don't love His followers." Some people wear such statements as a badge of honor: "I love Jesus, but not the church." I get that the institutional church has its problems; but Jesus does require that we love specific, individual Christians in community.

Specifically, this means that we're fooling ourselves if we say, "I love God, but I don't love other believers in my life group (or my ministry team, or my campus ministry, or in other churches/ministries)." This is what John wrote in 1 John 4:20-21:

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

If you realize that you don't love others as you should (and therefore that you don't love Jesus as you should), the response should be repentance. Admit that your life is pointed the wrong direction. By the grace of God, train your heart and mind and body to live differently.

Before we move on, let me point out something quite important, namely, that **God loved us first**. John 3:16 says that "God so loved the world that He sent His one-and-only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." The only reason anybody loves Jesus is because God loved us first and sent Him to us. In 1 John 4:10 John wrote:

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

God loved us first. Our love for Him is a response. The second main point in this passage clarifies the first. Jesus supplies the power and wisdom we need to love Him!

The triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) indwells us and empowers us to obey/love Jesus. (John 14:16-26) Jesus makes a series of staggering statements in these verses. If these verses are familiar to you, try to hear them with fresh ears and see them with fresh eyes. Jesus promises things that should fill us with faith and with awe. Jesus tells us truths that need to be understood, believed, and experienced.

16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

When Jesus says, "I am going to ask the Father" for something, you can be sure that it will be given. Jesus said He would ask the Father and "He will give you another **Helper**." The term used is translated in a variety of ways in different translations: Helper (NASB), Counselor (NIV), Comforter (KJV), Advocate (NRSV - as the NASB translates the term in 1 John 2:1). Sometimes the term is transliterated as "paraclete." This variation suggests that the term has a variety of connotations, depending on the context. The term literally means "one who is called alongside" another. This Helper is called alongside the believer to provide tangible help in following Christ.

Notice that Jesus says He is sending "another" Helper. The implication is that they have had one Helper - namely Jesus Himself; but since He is going away, He will send another Helper who would be with them forever. In verse 17 Jesus explains the identity of this Helper:

17 *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

The “Spirit of truth” is the Spirit who communicates truth. In the gospel of John, truth is closely associated with Jesus: Jesus was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) and Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). It would have been especially important for the disciples to understand that this Helper they would receive would be the Spirit who communicates to them the truth of Jesus. In other words, they would continue to learn of Jesus.

Jesus draws a sharp contrast between the experience of “the world” and His disciples. The world is “the moral order living in rebellion against God” (Carson, p. 500). Being in rebellion against God, the world **cannot** receive this Spirit “because it does not see Him or know Him.” In John 1 Jesus said this about the world’s response to Jesus:

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

We see continuity between the way that the world responded to Jesus and the way the world would respond to the Spirit; the world could not and did not receive either. By contrast, the disciples **did** know the Spirit of truth because they knew Jesus. This Spirit abides “with” them and will be “in” them. Jesus will clarify this later in the passage.

Beginning in verse 18 Jesus stresses that He Himself would be with them through the Spirit of truth:

18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

The disciples’ fear was being abandoned in this world - like children without the protection and provision that parents normally provide. Jesus explicitly says, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” Verse 19 suggests that He would “come to them” after the resurrection:

19 “After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you *will* see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

After the resurrection Jesus didn’t appear to the world (“the world will no longer see Me”) but He did appear to the disciples on numerous occasions. Jesus adds, “because I live, you will live also.” This is a common theme in the New Testament: whatever happened to Jesus happens to those who are “in Jesus/Christ.” Since Jesus would be resurrected, His disciples would live also.

In verse 21 Jesus returns to the topic of obedience and love.

21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

We’ve already seen that God loved us before we loved Him. Here Jesus says that God’s love not only precedes ours; it also follows our love. He loves us before and after we love Him. Furthermore, Jesus says, “. . .and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” As we obey and love Him, Jesus gives us a fuller understanding of Himself.

In verse 22 Judas (a different person than the Judas who had already left to betray Jesus) asked a question about Jesus’ disclosure to His disciples:

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?”

The disciples still thought of the Messiah’s disclosure as an apocalyptic event that got the attention of the entire world - both believers and unbelievers. Judas was probably voicing a question they all had: How is it that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus replies that this disclosure would involve the personal indwelling of the triune God:

23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

This term translated “abode” is the same word we saw earlier in the chapter in verse 2. There Jesus said that in His Father’s house are many “dwelling places.” Here Jesus says that just as the disciple would one day be at home in the Father’s house, the Father and the Son would come and be at home with the disciple. The Father and the Son will dwell with the believer through the Holy Spirit. This is a staggering thought: the TRINITY is at home with me! That changes everything when I think about doing what Jesus commands and showing Him my love.

In verse 24 Jesus restates what He’s already said, this time in negative terms (“he who does **not** love Me. . .”).

24 “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.

Once again Jesus stresses that He and the Father are fully united in purpose; they speak with one voice. This further heightens what Jesus has been saying about love, obedience, and His personal presence in the lives of the disciples.

As I mentioned earlier, the truth that the triune God indwells us and empowers us to love/obey Jesus is something we need to understand, believe, and experience. On one

level most of us probably **understand** this; we often teach that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer and empowers us to follow Jesus. But we need to give more than mental ascent to these truths; we need to **believe** them so that we can **experience** them.

I'd like you to do an exercise with me: Consider what your life would be like if you believed and therefore experienced these truths. Think about how you'd face disappointment, temptation, enemies, financial difficulties, ministry opportunities, family responsibilities, etc. In other words, think about how you'd be able to walk in obedience in these areas, expressing to Jesus that you love Him. Here's a catalog of the truths we've seen in these verses that we need to believe and experience:

The Father has given "another Helper" who is with me forever.
He is the Spirit of truth who communicates Jesus to me.
I know Him and He is in me.
I am **not** an orphan; I am not abandoned and alone in this world.
My heavenly Father loves me.
Jesus loves me and discloses Himself to me.
The triune God is right at home with me.

It's so very easy (and common) to form our theology from our circumstances and our experiences. We feel abandoned and unloved and lost, so we conclude that God is absent, that He is powerless and that He doesn't care. Our experience refines our theology, but it's not the starting point. The starting point is the Word. That's why we teach the Word each Sunday, why we read and meditate on the Word privately, and why we discuss the Word in groups. We need to be **formed** by the Word.

That will not happen merely by listening to a sermon (like this one). You will have to spend significant time thinking and praying about these truths if you want your mind to be renewed so that you believe these things are true (as opposed to the things you've concluded from your experience to date or your circumstances).

I'd like to encourage you to spend some time with these truths this week. We have posted these statements on our web site; go to the podcast section and click on "sermon text." Process these truths through one area of your life. For example, many of you look to the future with fear and anxiety; you have some valid concerns about how things will turn out financially, vocationally, relationally, spiritually, emotionally, etc. If you think you're all alone in this world, fear and anxiety make perfect sense. But if you believe that God has not abandoned you, but that He is right at home in your life, you can face an uncertain future with confidence and joy.