

SUMMER SERMONS

JOHN 14:21

ENJOYING CHRIST'S LOVE



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Every Christian wants to know more of Christ's love. We want to experience it, enjoy it, and extend it. We want it at all time and in all places. There's nothing like being loved by Christ. It makes us happy, it assures us of our faith, it carries us through trials, it inspires our service. We love the love of Christ.

But, we sometimes go long periods without a sense of Christ's love. We believe it, but we don't experience it. We believe it exists, but we don't enjoy it personally. So how can we get it, how can we get more of it, how can get it for longer?

The answer is **Jesus usually gives the most love to the most obedient**. Or to put it another way, **Jesus usually responds to our loving obedience with loving communion**. That's what we will discover in John 14:15-21.

Before we look at that, though, I want to explain why I put "usually" in the answer. If we are not experiencing Christ's love it's usually because we are not being obedient. However, there are exceptions to this general rule. For example, God may test us with a sense of his absence to see if we will keep faith even without feeling. Also mood disorders (e.g. depression/anxiety/schizophrenia), illness, and disease will inevitably affect our emotions and therefore our spiritual emotions too.

CONTEXT

In John 14, Jesus began his long goodbye to his disciples. He assured them that although he would depart from them physically, he would never leave them spiritually. He promised them constant connection and communion by His Holy Spirit. But he also challenged them to pursue that connection and communion through loving obedience.



How is our love and our obedience connected?



1. WE EXPRESS OUR LOVE BY OBEDIENCE

Here are three truths about the relationship between our obedience and our love.

Obedience does not earn God's love

Despite widespread belief to the contrary, God does not save us because we keep his commandments. Obedience does not and cannot save us. We cannot say this enough because it's the default human belief that we find in all places, peoples and times.

Obedience is not love for God

As we will see next, a person who does not want to keep God's commandments does not love God. However, just because a person keeps the commandments does not necessarily mean that they love God. A person can keep all the commandments (at least outwardly) and not have an ounce of love for God in the heart. That cold, mechanical, robotic, commandment-keeping is not what Jesus has in mind here. Love for God must come before the law of God (John 14:15).

Obedience expresses our love for God

If we love someone we want to do what's pleasing to them and delight to do so. If we love God, we express that, we communicate that, by doing what is pleasing to him. When Jesus speaks of the commandments here, he's speaking of all that God has revealed of what pleases him. He's saying, "If you love me and want to show that, here's how to do it."

♥ Praise God for letting us know what pleases him, what makes him happy. Many relationship problems arise from people not explaining what they really like or really hate. Or perhaps their likes and dislikes are changing all the time, leaving others in a state of constant fear and uncertainty. God is not like that. His likes and dislikes are clear, constant, and communicated.

♥ What areas of disobedience are muting our love for God? We can talk and sing about love to God but if we are walking in disobedience, we're giving God ear-plugs that block out our praise and our service. If we want God to hear our expressions of love, we have to search our lives for thought-sins, desire sins, word-sins, act-sins, and omission-sins. As we pluck these out of our lives, we unplug God's ears to our love.

IF GOD'S LOVE LANGUAGE IS OBEDIENCE
LET'S TALK TO HIM IN HIS LANGUAGE.



That's how we express our love for God.
How do we enjoy God's love for us?



2. WE ENJOY GOD'S LOVE BY OBEDIENCE

Here are three truths about the relationship between our obedience and God's love.

Obedience does not change God's love for us

Nothing can change God's love for his people. Unlike human love, his love for his people is eternal and unchangeable. It has no beginning, it has no end, and it has no changes. There's nothing you can do or not do to increase or decrease God's love for you.

Obedience does change the expression of God's love for us

However, just as a parent's love for their child can be expressed differently depending on the child's obedience, so it is with God's love. God's steady and constant heart of love can be released as a flood, a river, a stream, a spring, a drip, and even can sometimes become a drought. As I said earlier, this is usually determined by our obedience.

Obedience does change the experience of God's love for us

It's also possible that the change may be in our experience of God's love. It's like a stream of love is heading towards us but our disobedience puts a big boulder in the way which blocks and diverts God's love. But whether it's the expression of God's love or our experience of God's love that changes, the ultimate cause is the same (disobedience) and the ultimate effect is the same. No sense of God's love.

But the emphasis of this text is not the loss of love through disobedience but the gain of love through obedience. Obedience improves the flow and removes the boulders to God's triple-person love. When God loves, it's not just one person but three divine persons loving us. The Father and Son live in and love the believer via the Holy Spirit (21).

Our obedience fluctuates so much. Does this mean the expression and experience of God's love fluctuates all the time? Does he react to every single act of disobedience? No. God takes a longer-term view, a bigger-picture of our lives. He looks at our lives over a period of time and detects a pattern, a direction, a theme that he responds to. If our theme is loving obedience, God's theme is loving communion. If our overall pattern is disobedience, then God's overall pattern is distance.

♥ Isn't this an amazing possibility? We can enjoy far greater experiences of God's love. None of us have ever maxxed out on that. There's more available. There are limitless possibilities. We've barely scratched the surface of Christ's love. And now we know the way to go deeper and closer.

♥ Next time you're tempted to disobedience, think of what you could lose. Next time you hesitate about obeying, remember what you could gain. Why not memorize John 14:21 to motivate your obedience and help you in the battle. When sin calls, ask, "Do I love God or sin?" and "Do I want God's love or sin's love?"

**JESUS USUALLY GIVES THE MOST LOVE
TO THOSE WHO GIVE MOST OBEDIENCE**



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [The Pleasure of Pleasing God](#) by Luke Humphrey
- [He Carries a Kind of Heaven](#) by Richard Sibbes
- [His Commandments are Not Burdensome](#) by John Piper
- [If you love me, keep my commandments](#) by Ligon Duncan
- [The Relationship Between "Love" and "Commandments" in the Writings of John](#) by Justin Taylor
- [What can and cannot change in our relationship with God](#) by Justin Taylor

Discussion Questions

- How would you describe your experience of Christ's love?
- How would you explain the relationship between our obedience and our love?
- What areas of disobedience are muting our love for God?
- When have you most (and least) experienced Christ's love?
- How will this text help you to overcome temptation?
- How does this text help you obey even when it costs?
- Does this text encourage you or scare you?

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JOHN 14:15-21

ENJOYING CHRIST'S LOVE

OUR UNION WITH CHRIST IS STATIC,
BUT OUR COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IS DYNAMIC
WE NEED THE STATIC ELEMENT OF UNION
TO KEEP US FROM DOUBTING.
BUT WE ALSO NEED THE DYNAMIC ASPECT OF
COMMUNION TO KEEP US PURSUING.

LUKE HUMPHREY



Little sense of Christ's love

- How do we get it?
- How do we get more of it?

Biblical answer?



We express our love by obedience

- Obedience doesn't earn God's love
- Obedience is not love for God
- Obedience expresses love for God

IF GOD'S LOVE LANGUAGE IS OBEDIENCE
LET'S TALK TO HIM IN HIS LANGUAGE.

Enjoy God's love?



Give more loving obedience
to get more loving communion.



We enjoy God's love by obedience

- Obedience doesn't change God's love
- Obedience changes expression of God's love
- Obedience changes experience of God's love

JESUS USUALLY GIVES THE MOST LOVE
TO THOSE WHO GIVE MOST OBEDIENCE

Action?



THE PROMISE OF GLORY IS THE PROMISE,
ALMOST INCREDIBLE AND ONLY POSSIBLE BY
THE WORK OF CHRIST, THAT SOME OF US, THAT
ANY OF US WHO REALLY CHOOSES . . . SHALL
FIND APPROVAL, SHALL PLEASE GOD. TO PLEASE
GOD . . . TO BE A REAL INGREDIENT IN THE
DIVINE HAPPINESS . . . TO BE LOVED BY GOD,
NOT MERELY PITIED, BUT DELIGHTED IN AS AN
ARTIST DELIGHTS IN HIS WORK OR A FATHER IN
A SON – IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, A WEIGHT OR
BURDEN OF GLORY WHICH OUR THOUGHTS CAN
HARDLY SUSTAIN. BUT SO IT IS.

C. S. LEWIS