

The Final Days of Jesus
THE DEFINITION OF FRIENDS

Thursday, March 19
Reading: John 15:12-25

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. **14** You are My friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you.

To be a slave or servant of God was a title of honor. Moses, David, and even the Messiah are called servants of God. Now Jesus adds a new term to describe His followers – “friends.” In ancient times there was a very select group of men called “the friends of the king.” They had access to the king at all times and he talked with them before he talked to his generals or other advisors. They had the closest and most intimate connection with the king. This is what Jesus meant when He called His disciples’ friends.

Friends SACRIFICE (15:12-13). Jesus said the greatest expression of love was to “lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” In a few hours Jesus would give us the ultimate example of this love by dying on the cross for our sins.

Friends OBEY (15:14). Jesus again points to obedience as the mark of being His follower. A friend trusts and obeys Christ because he or she knows He has their best interests at heart. A friend obeys to magnify Christ and His kingdom.

Friends KNOW (15:15). Slaves don’t know their master’s plans. They are just expected to obey. But Christ has told His friends the Father’s will and given us His Word. We can obey with understanding of God’s plan through the Spirit and the Scriptures.

Friends have a PURPOSE (15:16). Usually a disciple would choose the rabbi he would follow. But Jesus reversed this. He chose His followers for a purpose – that they may bear fruit.

Friends LOVE (15:17-25). The need for believers to love each other is made clear by the hatred of the world. To hate Christ is to hate the Father and to hate His followers. It should be no surprise when the world despises and persecutes those who belong to Christ. We need the love and support of other Christians in this world.

LESSON ONE: “Greater Love.” Jesus stresses love throughout this last teaching to His disciples. The measure of our relationship to Christ is based on our love. We are to love as He loved. Look over the list of friendship principles in this devotional. What areas are you strong in? What areas do you need the Spirit to work in your heart to improve?

LESSON TWO: “They Have No Excuse for Their Sin.” The religious leaders of Jesus’ day looked good on the outside. Everyone thought they were holy and righteous. In fact, the name ‘Pharisee’ means “separated one.” But Jesus’ words and works exposed them for the charlatans they were. Their rejection of Christ showed they didn’t really know God. Many people today are the same way. They do a lot of good things and appear to be good people, but they reject Jesus as Lord and Savior. Everything they do is for their own purposes and glory. Do you know people like that? Take time today to pray for them that they will open their eyes to see that salvation is only found through faith in Christ.