

Leader's Guide

JESUS TEACHES US... ABOUT LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

November 26, 2006
John 15:12-17

LEADER'S GUIDE
for small group
discussion prepared
to aid you in digging
deeper and taking to
heart what we are
exploring on
Sunday mornings.



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Overview

Jesus calls us to a "because of" kind of living; not an "in order to" kind of life. We are to live right *because we have come to love Him*. And, that changes us!

Walk it through

Most people have experienced being on the receiving end of someone else's "loving action" when the action was only done out of duty. When there is no heart-motivation, then the act can end up hollow.

In John 14:15, Jesus says that those who love will keep His commandments. He is *not* saying: Do what I want you to do, to earn or deserve My love. What He is saying, is that if we *really love Him* than *that love for Him will flow out in actions—doing what He asks us to do*. That's the difference between "because of" living (acting right because we love Him!) and "in order to" living (acting right in order to get Him to love us!).

In John 15:12, Jesus develops these thoughts further. He is talking to those who are His closest friends; He is explaining to them how to continue enjoying intimacy with Him when He is no longer physically present with them. And He says that their love for Him should spill over into relating to others. That is, if they really do love Him, they will prize what He prizes and value what He values; they will, therefore, love others as He loves them.

For Jesus, the heart of the issue is what is going on in the heart! If our hearts are genuinely captured in love for Jesus, we will grow in living right. When we are confronted, by the Scriptures, about deficiencies in our behavior, we must be careful about merely adjusting the behavior to "look good." The problem is a heart problem . . . it's really about our love for the One who loves us!

Discussion Guide

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Thinking it through . . .

What's the difference between doing something because "you have to" and doing something because "you want to"? What is different in your motivations? Feelings?

Would you rather have someone respond positively to you because he or she had to or because she or he wanted to? Why?

How is your heart connected to what you do? That is the issue underneath our opening questions, and the issue behind Jesus words. Read John 14:15.

What is Jesus' point? How are heart and actions understood to be connected?

Jesus develops these thoughts in John 15:12-17. Read what He has to say there.

Do you think that Jesus is calling us to do certain things in order to deserve or earn His love? Why or why not?

Many well-intentioned Christians seem to be confused about the connection between our hearts and our actions. They think that what Jesus wants for them is to capitulate to things they "have to do" while Jesus seems more interested in having us live right because "we want to." The heart of the issue, for Jesus, appears to be our hearts!

What difference does this make?

If you really were captured in love for Jesus, how do you think that would change the way you related to others? The way you "do life"?