



## TIME OF GRACE®

# Jesus' Love, My Life: Let My Love Do the Talking

## Study Notes

### Summary

Why doesn't God just take his kids out of this broken world? Answer: Because God wants more people to believe and be saved. This is how Jesus closed his epic prayer in John chapter 17, a fact that reminds every Christian of the incredible calling we have to share our Savior with the world.

- **John 17:20-26:** <sup>20</sup> My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. <sup>25</sup> Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.
- Be \_\_\_\_\_ to prove he's the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 Keys to Being 1:
  1. Bump (hold tightly to the \_\_\_\_\_)
  2. Shake (hold \_\_\_\_\_ loosely)
  3. Hug (stay \_\_\_\_\_ but not \_\_\_\_\_)

### Points to Ponder

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how "one" are you with the Christians in your church/family/circle of friends? Which of the three keys—the bump, the shake, or the hug—would you like to work on this week?

2. Read Philippians 2:1-11. How do verses 1-4 connect with today's message? How do verses 5-11 remind you of the glorious love that Jesus has given you?
  
3. **Challenge:** Pray by name for three people whom you know that don't regularly go to church. Ask God to open a door to invite them or to share the gospel with them in some other way.

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1,2.

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Jesus Love, My Life: Let My Love Do the Talking**  
John 17:20-26  
March 29, 2020

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

If you're a Christian, how much would you be willing to pay for a plus one pass to heaven?

If you're anything like me, I'm betting your answer is anything. I mean, anything! If we could be guaranteed that someone's forever would be changed, we would give up anything. I mean, we wouldn't just pay \$50 or \$100; we would clear out our savings account if it could save someone's soul. We'd donate a kidney, we'd sacrifice everything, we'd live without Netflix for a whole year if we have to; I mean, extreme measures because when you care about someone and you love Jesus, nothing matters more than that someone starts to care about Jesus.

And that's why as Christian people, we do so much. We pray so often and we try so hard to connect people to Jesus. Now if you're a person who's here in church today or watching the live stream or checking us out on television and you don't believe in Jesus just yet or maybe you do but like your life doesn't really revolve around him in a really practical and daily way, I should probably talk to you instead of just awkwardly talking about you. So here's what I want you to know: That nothing matters more in the world to Christians, to us, than your connection to Jesus.

In fact, did you know that when I was 17, when I had plans to study business at UW-Madison, I opened my Bible and I read something that Jesus said and I had this spark in my heart that I wanted to become a pastor for the first time in my life. And right about that time, I actually made God a promise and my promise to him was this: God, if you change just one person, the next 50 years would be worth it. If I have to go to work, you know, not just one day a week like some of you think, you know, but day after day and year after year, if I spend like the next 40, 50 years, my entire ministry, my entire career, and just one person like meets Jesus and gets changed, it would be totally worth it. I said to God, "I'll trade you; a life for one person." Because honestly, what is 40 or 50 years next to someone's forever?

And if you're not a follower of Jesus just yet, I really hope you think about what I just said. That literally, I'm not being dramatic or exaggerating, I would trade the rest of my life for you to trust in Jesus. In fact, the apostle Paul said in the Bible that he would actually trade his own eternity if the people he loved would trust in Jesus and be with him forever. If that was even possible, Paul loved them so much he would do it. And that's why we do so many things around here. Because we don't just care about our own; we care about our friends, our neighbors, our community who isn't sure about Jesus, isn't religious, isn't Christian, just yet.

But I wonder if you've missed something? Because the other day I opened my Bible to John 17 and I read something that Jesus prayed the night before he died on the cross. And it was actually about this topic except Jesus didn't say a word about websites or social media or where you park

or where you sit. He said something about the "go" root that I never thought of before; something that he said had the power and potential to actually make the people that you know and love interested in loving Jesus a little bit more. And today, I want to share Jesus' words with you. It's actually a prayer that he prayed to God. But I want to warn you up front before I open my Bible, it's kind of confusing, alright? So I have this theory that Jesus was like spending a lot of time in a boat with his fisherman buddies and I think they got kind of philosophical at times so sometimes they speak in like this really weird – like sense, the words make sense but they're really hard to get your brain around, okay? So if you kind of dozed off on me for a second, I need you to turn up your brain power to full blast because we're going to try to understand the thing that Jesus prayed to connect our community to his compassion and his love. So check out Jesus' prayer in John 17; he starts in verse 20 with these words.

He says, "My prayer is not for them alone." So not just for the disciples who were with Jesus in the room that night. "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message," which kind of includes you, right? Any future Christians who believe in the message that the apostles preached, Jesus is praying for us. And here's the reason: "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me." I told you, right? Gets a little bit like hazy and abstract there in the middle but you kind of see the main point there at the end of these verses. Jesus is praying so that the world may believe that you sent me. So Jesus wants the whole world - like your classmates, your roommates, your boyfriends, your kids - he wants everyone to believe that he, Jesus, is not just some guy, not just some good teacher, not just some interesting philosopher, he wants the whole world to believe that God himself sent Jesus. That Jesus is like the one; he's the Promised One, the Messiah, he's the Lord, the Savior. He is the Son of God. That's what Jesus wants and did you notice how he gets there? He says, "Father, I'm praying for Christians, those who will believe in me through the message, that they would be one. Just like we are, Father." If Christians in modern day churches can be just like we are, if they can be one, than the world's going to watch and wonder and they might even worship me as the one who was sent from the Father.

So that's Jesus' idea. Like you think of a big equal sign - Jesus says if our relationship together as a church, as Christian people, like is equal to the relationship that Jesus has with his heavenly Father, that is going to be so like magnetic to the people in our lives, they're going to reconsider Jesus. Okay, but what exactly does that mean for you and I to have a relationship like Jesus in the Father? That's what he explains next. Check out verse 22 - he says, "Father, I've given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one; I in them and you in me, so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you've sent me. I have made you known to them and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

And so here is Jesus' logic; he says the Father and I love each other and if you can love another person in the church, if you and I as fellow Christians can have love that's just as the Father has for the Son, then the world will know that Jesus is not just a guy but that he's the Son of God. So

if you're taking notes in your program, here's the big idea - if I was going to put it in one sentence - I would say this: That Jesus prayed that we would be one to prove that he is the one.

So what does this look like practically? I'm going to invite my friend Dave to come up on stage with me; he's going to be my brave and bold volunteer. Dave just found out about this about 10 minutes before church started so he's going to do a great job. Would you give our friend Dave a round of applause as he comes up? Alright, Dave, I'm going to have you stand over here. So practically, if Dave and I are going to love each other well, we have to master three things and you're going to have to master these same things in your life, too. We're going to have to master the fist bump, the handshake, and the man hug. Oh, that's a good man hug right there, right? Very impressed by that hug; thank you very much. Alright, here's what I mean by that. A fist bump, or when two people make a fist and they bump it - you want to write that down? That was pretty good there; I went to school for a lot of years so we're good now. Now here's what that represents, if you're taking notes, that when Dave and I both hold on tightly to the word of God, we can love each other as Christians in really practical ways. Alright, if Dave tries to give me a fist bump and I'm not holding on tightly like - it is awkward, isn't it? Sweaty hand and everything. So as Christians, you know, if we're completely united, which the Father and the Son are, right? They don't agree to disagree on what's true and what's not; they hold tightly to the same truths. That's part of their love and their unity and so when Dave holds onto all the teachings of Jesus and I do the same thing, there's great love in the church.

Which brings us to the second thing, the handshake. A handshake is when you open up your hand and you shake it. That's pretty deep here today, folks. Now I think of that as like the opinions that Dave and I are going to hold about stuff that's not in the Bible. You know, Dave's a hunting guy - you're rocking some camo today - I don't know how to shoot a gun and it's too cold outside for me so I play soccer and read books. But you know, if we don't fight about stuff that's not in the Bible, we keep an open hand, then we can shake in love. When he and I can do church together and we don't just get caught up in all the, you know, opinions and preferences and I like this and you like that - when we're more concerned like about our unity and connection, we're going to - you know, if he and I both hold onto everything, we're going to fight instead of having fellowship. So part of true Christian love is just letting stuff go and he's going to do the same thing and there's connection in love.

And then there's the final thing we have to master, which is the hug. So if Dave stands over there and I stand over here, it's going to be hard to hug from a distance. Now that's awkward, right? So there's two things you need to hug another human being; it's our final note here. You have to stay close but not closed, right? So I have to stay close to Dave, I have to be close enough to his life and he to mine, but then we can't be closed off, you know? If we have our arms crossed and we try to hug - just go with it, man; just go with it. Right? So you've got to be close to someone's life but then you've got to kind of open up, right? So the man hug starts when men are open to one another and you get close that way, right? So if we're going to come to church, we actually have to invest in each other's lives but then we can't fake it; we can't be superficial and say we're good when we're not. We have to open up, we have to confess, we have to encourage, and if he and I can do those three things, if we both can hold onto the word of God, if we can be chill and humble with our opinions, and if we can live in real fellowship, be

open and yet close, we'll have the love that the Father and Son have for each other. Alright, let's give Dave a round of applause. Thank you very much, brother. Good job, man.

Alright, do you know why Jesus prayed for that? Because all of it is incredibly hard. You know, I can crack jokes up here and we can laugh and fill in the blanks, but all three of those things will probably be the hardest things you do this week. Like, to hold onto the word of God is hard. Being wishy-washy and like spiritual but not religious, that's easy. Picking from the Bible buffet and saying, "I like this page," and "I don't like that page," and "I agree with what Jesus said here but I don't like," - that's easy. Anyone can do that about anything. You know, saying you're going to walk away from a church because you don't agree with that, just because you don't agree with that, it's your opinion. I mean, that is so easy; anyone can do that. To be like the chameleon who believes one thing when you're with these friends and another thing when you go off to college and another thing when you're having lunch with grandma, easy. But to hold onto it, to say, "Jesus, man, if you're God, if you rose from the dead and you said it, it's true." And so for two people to like hold onto that as true and pursue it is really hard and that's why Jesus prayed. I think especially like in our day of what the world tells you about you. I dare you this week, check out on like t-shirts and social media feeds and commercials how often the word "self" is used in modern day America. You know, you have to treat yourself and you have to be true to yourself and you should trust yourself. Every Disney movie and t-shirt for nine year old girls at Justice is about you being true to yourself. But do you know what Jesus would say? Yourself is messed up. Like when your momma and daddy made you, they passed on the messed up thing that was in their heart into your heart. Like you can rationalize all sorts of things. You can talk yourself into crazy ideas. You can minimize sin. Don't do you. Do what God said! And like to hold onto that, the countercultural stuff that Jesus said, is really, really hard and not many people will do it.

But I don't think that's nearly as hard as the handshake. Being super opinionated about your opinions? That's easy. Like hopping from church to church because it gets difficult and you butted heads, easy. Digging in your heels, expressing yourself, being true to what you think and feel, super easy. Like being that person who's going to hold to this opinion and cause a faction in the church, super easy. But to open up that hand and be humble enough to care more about a relationship than being right? That's hard.

I've been a pastor, for what, almost 12 years now and I'm trying to think of all the tension that I've seen among Christians; like a lack of love and unity. And you know, I'd say 99 percent of the time it has nothing to do with the Bible. People fight about church budgets, they fight about musical style, they fight about what you should wear to church. God doesn't care what you wear to church; he cares if you love the people who are at your church. You know? And so, Christians, we just get jacked up because we want to hold onto everything and fight about every opinion and write a blog and make a comment and Jesus doesn't care. He cares about love. And so it's hard to open up that hand and like stand on the truth, but just the truth, and nothing more. But honestly, I don't think this or this is anywhere close to as hard as the hug. Like doing your own thing? Easy. Coming to church, calling yourself Christian? Easy. Having like your budget for your family, your schedule for your life, super easy. But being close to another person, to love them in ways that actually take time and cost you energy and money? Really hard. It's no accident that when Jesus told this story of the Good Samaritan, it was two very religious people

who walked by him on the other side of the road. I'm sure they were busy and they had things to do and love that day didn't fit into their schedule. And that's the hard part. Like if we're actually going to be close as a church, we can't just run in our own lane; we have to care about people. We can't just even sign up for a life group and think it's community. But to believe that the people in that group are the ones we're going to love in a deep and profound way. And then to be open! I mean, the church is famous for faking it. You know, where we say we're good and we're not. When we have questions about our gender, our bodies, our identity, our sexuality, forgiveness, marriage, divorce, we don't talk about that. Like we keep it closed even if we're in the same room as other Christians. And so to be open, like to honestly confess, to come to church and be real about whatever's going on, that is really hard, it's risky, and it's embarrassing.

And I think that's why Jesus prayed. I mean, he knew the clock was ticking. He was about to go to the cross. He only had like a few more sentences with his heavenly Father but he knew it would take like a supernatural answer to the prayer of Jesus himself for you to hold onto the word, let go of your opinions, and actually do the loving life with other people.

So I wonder right now how God's nudging you. And as I talk through those three things, was there one where you just kind of like felt the heaviness of it? Because God cares so much about the people that would watch if he did it. And so you know, maybe this is the week that you're going to get serious about the teachings of Jesus. You're going to stop believing that crazy lie that doesn't even make sense when you think about it; that whatever you just believe is probably true. Oh my goodness, no. You're going to have to get serious about the teachings of Jesus. What did he say? What didn't he say? What is truth? And for some of you, maybe the Spirit is nudging you like before this day is done, you're going to get out your phone and you're going to send a text to someone you felt tension with at this church. And you're going to admit, "You know what, I cared so much about my own interests, I cared so much about this issue, the Bible doesn't say anything about this but, man, I was saying everything about this and I forgot about love. I forgot about us." And you're going to open up the hand and offer to reconcile. And for others of you, this is going to be the first time that maybe in your entire religious life that you're real. That church becomes the place where we actually confess and we admit if it's messy. This is going to be the place where we're going to invest in some deep relationships and it's going to cost us so I'm going to have to budget for it and I can't cram my schedule full with everything because there are going to be people who are going to need my love and time and maybe more than a text or a little emoji on social media; they need me to be there close. And maybe this is a moment that God's going to reroute like the purpose of your life. It's not to get rich or famous or powerful; it's to love people and love takes time.

So Jesus prayed that you would do something today because he knows the eternal potential if you do. If you're anything like me, there are people you deeply love - like this year, this Easter - man, it would be the best gift of all if they would come to know Jesus. And Jesus says, "I've got a good way for that to happen: Love." You know, I was just imagining the other day the kind of stories that could happen this year at our church if we loved each other in like a weird way and it made the world wonder about Jesus. I was thinking, like this daughter, she comes home after the semester is over and she says to her mom, "Who are the flowers from?" And mom says, "They're from some ladies at my church. They somehow remembered like the week that your father died four years ago." And the daughter says, "Really? They remembered that?" Or this

guy whose friends say, like, "Who's that dude from your church? He's kind of awkward." To which the guy says, "Yeah. But you know what? God calls us to love in ways that don't exclude people but invite them in." And they say, "Really?" Or one guy's sitting shotgun next to his friend and he said, "Dude, no disrespect, but this is an embarrassing excuse for a truck. When are you going to buy something new?" To which the driver responds, "Well, I was actually close, I saved up the money, but this family at my church went through something and my friend was getting a divorce and he didn't know if he could pay all the bills and get by, so I took all the money I saved up and I just gave it to him." And the passenger says, "Really?" Or a woman goes through a divorce and her college roommate shows up to help her pack and move and then seven cars roll up and she says, "Who's that?" And the divorced woman says, "Well, that's my group. They were praying my marriage would make it but even though it didn't, they're not going to leave me." And she says, "Really?" Or a guy's got a phone out during the playoff game and his buddy says, "What are you doing?" He says, "Oh, I'm texting a guy from my church. Like he struggles with pornography and so I try to encourage him and pray for him every day." And the friend says, "Wait, you talk about that at your church?" And the guy says, "Yeah, and he encourages me with my stuff, too." And he says, "Really?"

Father, Jesus prayed, if they would be one, the world would know that you sent me. That's what Jesus prayed for you this week. And while that might seem hard and maybe for some of us, impossible, I can tell you this: When Jesus himself prays, nothing is impossible. If the Bible says that the prayers of a righteous person in Jesus name are powerful and effective, how powerful and effective do you think it is when Jesus himself prays? And the night before he bled, he prayed for you. He prayed for our church; for everyone who would believe in him through the message that we would be one.

And you know the best part of all? He didn't just pray. Let me show you one last passage before I say "Amen" today. In verse 22, Jesus said, "Father, I have given them," the Christians, "the glory that you gave me." I love that! Do you remember what the glory is that God gave his son, Jesus? Love. And Jesus says here, Father, I've given Christians that glorious love that you gave me. See, the most incredible thing that I want to tell you today is not to love each other better but it's to open your eyes to like the glorious, ridiculous love that Jesus has for you. Did you know before the creation of the world, the Father and the Son had a conversation and the Father, in a way, asked Jesus, "How much would you pay for a plus one pass to heaven?" And Jesus thought of you and he said, "Father, anything." And he wouldn't clear out his savings account; he would sacrifice himself. He wouldn't follow a comfortable road but one that led to a cross so that you and I, people who struggle with this and with this and with this, we would know that we are one with God because Jesus is the one. He's the one who gave up everything and anything so that you could be forgiven and loved; so that this glorious truth could be true of you, too: That you are one with God. Not distant, not far, but close because his heart is open.

It reminds me of the passage at Fox Valley Lutheran. I know some of you are students there and maybe you remember that passage right there in the cafeteria before you leave out to your cars; the passage that says, "Be imitators of God as dearly loved children." That is a perfect passage! Like, alright Christians, you heard about Jesus in this school, now imitate God. The God who is so united in love, I want you to go act like that when you're out in the world. I want you to love each other that way. But I love the fact that then there's a comma and not a period. "Be imitators



of God," comma, "as dearly loved children." It's like you're not just the children of God; that would be ridiculous. You're not just the loved children of God; that would be ridiculous-er. You are the dearly loved children of God, which is the ridiculous-est. I don't know if that's a word but it should be because that is crazy that after all of our struggles and all of our sins, God says this glorious thing: You are my son, whom I love. You're my daughter, whom I love. With you, I am well pleased.

So this year, if you want those people to trust in Jesus, you should keep investing, keep inviting, keep evangelizing, but don't forget this: To love; to love the person sitting next to you. Brothers and sisters, it would be the greatest thing in the world if this church was not known for this massive screen or for a style of music or for sermons on TV but for the way that we love. If that light shines brightly, people will see our good deeds and maybe, maybe, maybe, one day, they will praise our Father in heaven.

Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for your love. If I were you, I never would have paid that price but your love is supernatural and profound and we are so grateful for it. God, I pray for everyone who's on the fence about faith; everyone who's unsure that you are actually the Son of God. That the price you paid would just make them think that no one in the world would be that sacrificial and selfless except for you, except God. I pray, God, for the kind of character it's going to take to live this message this week. We need your Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of love in all of us because it's going to be so hard in those moments. So give us patience, give us gentleness, give us self-control, give us kindness, give us the peace and joy that we need to love each other well.

God, this week, our church celebrates 10 years of existence. On April 19th, 10 years ago, we opened the doors and we have seen people whose forevers have been changed. We've celebrated as people's sins were washed away in baptism. We've seen people who grew up religious but they never had a relationship with you and we are so grateful, God. Thank you for the love and community that has existed in this place. We are not starting from square one but we pray in your mercy that you would move us even further and faster. There are so many people, God, that we care about and we have no idea how much time we have left. We want them and we know that you want them to be with Jesus forever in glory. So help us to love passionately, sacrificially, abnormally, that they would believe that you, Jesus, were sent by God. We pray this all with confidence because we know who we are - we're not just people - we are your dearly loved children. We pray it all in Jesus' name, Amen.