



## TIME OF GRACE®

# *What Is Love? Isn't Jesus on MY Side?*

## Study Notes

### *Summary*

Most people, even unchurched people, know that Jesus taught us to love one another. In addition, perhaps the most quoted Bible passage in contemporary culture is, “Do not judge,” a phrase meant to end any disapproval of another’s behavior. Yet few people have closely read the words of Jesus to understand what he meant (and didn’t mean) by “love.” This message looks at Jesus’ life to study his call to love, his confrontation of sin, and his willingness to die for even his enemies.

- John wrote the Gospel of \_\_\_\_\_.
- Overview: John 1:1-21
- Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Matthew 11:28-30**<sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Read on of the chapters from John’s Gospel. Where do you see the toughness of Jesus? Where do you find our Savior being tender?
2. Set your phone timer for five minutes and pray for our Life Groups/church members to be the right mixture of touch and tender with one another.
3. Read 1 John, the little letter in the New Testament that is packed with love. Underline every verse that feels tough and star every verse that feels tender.
4. Next week’s message attempts to explain why there is so much anger and hatred in modern times. Think of a friend who is worn out from the contemporary drama and invite them to find something better in Jesus.

## *Homework for Next Week*

Read John 14.

Time of Grace Ministry  
**What Is Love? Isn't Jesus on MY Side?**  
John 1:1-21; Matthew 11:28-30  
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Whenever I hear about controversial issues in society, in the church, when it comes to morality, I do not think I have ever once heard someone say that Jesus was wrong and they are right. Have you ever heard that? I have never heard someone say Jesus was way off but I know better than Jesus. Or, Jesus was so judgmental you do not want to follow him. You should follow me. Or, Jesus obviously was a hater so you need to shake him off. And you need to listen to my teaching because I know love. But I never heard anything close to that. What I have heard, whether the person is on this side of the issue or that one, is that here is me and I am standing with Jesus and the rest of you should join us. Have you heard that too? Like pick an issue, right? The kind of traditional, focus on the family, nuclear family values people would say. But we believe this because of Jesus.

Remember in Matthew 19 Jesus talked about marriage. He talked about one man, one woman, creation, what God has joined together. Let people not separate. Sexual immorality. This gift. Very few causes for divorce. We believe what we believe. And we believe it is loving because of Jesus. But other people would say, what? Have you read the Bible? I mean Jesus rarely, rarely, rarely took the traditional position on anything. He broke the mold. He shocked the traditional church-going crowd. They did not know what to do with him. And who did he befriend and love? It was the prostitute, the tax collector, the divorced woman. He opened his arms to all the people that the church had pushed out of its doors. That is Jesus. And that is why we believe this is love.

Now some people on social media or on busy street corners, they make posts and they hold signs. They talk about heaven and hell. Repentance and faith. And if you ask them why they would say, Jesus. Remember Jesus' first ever sermon in Mark 1, repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. According to Jesus, heaven is not as crowded as this church service. Have you heard that? He said the gates are narrow, the road is traveled by very, very few. He did not just talk about everyone going to a better place. He talked about weeping, gnashing of teeth, fire, darkness, the existence of hell. So, you might think it is unloving, but Jesus did not. And so, we say it without being ashamed of it because that is what Jesus said. Other people would say what? What? Little children came running into the arms of Jesus. When is the last time you saw a little kid run into the arms of a fire and brimstone preacher? When do women ever gather around a guy who threatens them with eternal condemnation? No, I mean that is not where Jesus stood. He was about including, being the way to the Father. God loving not some people but all people. A whole world of people.

I could give you so many more examples. You talk about a cultural issue like immigration. Some people would say oh no, there are laws and Jesus said you should obey the laws, right? Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and God what is God's. And other people would say are you kidding? When Jesus himself was in danger from a powerful dictator, what did Mary and Joseph do? They turned him into an immigrant. They crossed an international border to save the son of God from the political danger that he was in. So, we stand where we stand because of Jesus. And issue after issue after issue after issue you choose a or you choose b. And everyone says, well, Jesus is with us and if you want to be a loving person you should join us too.

Two thousand years ago, when he walked this earth, what did he really say and whose side did he actually take? Well, that is the question I want to answer with you today. If we would take just a closer look at Jesus, is there any indication about whose side he took, what stance he took, and how we can learn from his perfect example of love? Now thankfully, I have someone who is going to help me today. Jesus' best friend, the man named John. If you are taking notes, I would love for you to write this down. John wrote one of the four biographies of Jesus in the New Testament. What we call the gospels. There is Matthew, there is Mark, there is Luke and there is John. But John was especially famous for being the gospel of love. The gospel of love. Fun fact for you Bible nerds, the word love shows up 36 total times in Matthew, Mark and Luke combined, 36. In the gospel of John alone 39 times. So, if you want to learn about Jesus and love you need to read the gospel of John. Love one another, that is in John. God so loved the world, that is in John. Greater love as no one than this, that is in John. So, Jesus and love is what John is all about.

In John 1 we kick off with these epic words. John says that when Jesus came down from the Father he was full of grace and truth. That is why before the end of the chapter Jesus meets a man named Nathaniel. And Nathaniel kind of takes a jab at Jesus' small-town roots. Nazareth, can anything good come from Nazareth? But instead of dropping a bomb on Nathaniel, dude, you just insulted God, bye-bye. No, he says Nathaniel follow me. And he did.

In John 2, Jesus went to a wedding and the family was panicking because the wine was running low. It was not yet his time to reveal himself but get this, Jesus, full of grace, loved them so much he changed his divine timetable and pulled off his first miracle. He turned regular water into the richest red wine the guests had ever tasted. And, same page in my Bible, he went to Jerusalem. He walked into the first century church, and he had what one pastor called a temple tantrum. Flipped over the tables, brought a weapon into the worship space and scattered everyone. Same Jesus.

In John 3, Jesus met a man named Nicodemus. And it was more than a micro-aggression when Jesus said to him, you are Israel's teacher and you do not know this stuff? Which he said one page before these words, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son.

In John 4, Jesus met the outcast of all outcasts. A Samaritan woman at a well. Have you heard the story? She was married then divorced, married, divorced, married, divorced. Married too many times and divorced. Now she was with a guy, probably sleeping with a guy that she was not married to. And Jesus, even though he was Jewish, he went out of his way through Samaritan

territory just to meet her. And once he did, he embarrassed her so badly. Go get your husband, he said, knowing she did not have one. And yet in the same conversation he offered her everything. The kind of living water, he called it, that could satisfy her soul. Something that would give her more than all these guys could ever give her. He was offering her God and it was such good news. She raced back into town and told everyone who would listen, I have found him. And she will not leave his side.

In John 5, Jesus met a disabled man, 38 years he had never taken a step. And Jesus smiled and he said get up and walk. And the dude did. Could you imagine 38 years, you do not take a step? What is that day like? He is skipping, he is running, doing cartwheels. I do not know what he is doing. But then Jesus finds him, verse 14, "Later Jesus found him at the temple and said, see you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." And then apparently, he said amen.

In John 7, Jesus said none of you keeps the law. And yet he offered to give his life to satisfy their souls.

In John 8, epic story, he sees a woman caught in the act of adultery. The church people want to kill her. So, Jesus stands up for her. He says to the crowd, if any of you is without sin you can throw the first stone. And when they left, our savior tenderly said to her, I do not condemn you. Next sentence. Now go and leave your life of sin.

In John 9, Jesus made a blind man see. And then he warned the crowd about their spiritual blindness.

In John 10, he called himself a good shepherd, inspiring a million cheesy Christian paintings with little lambs in the arms of Jesus. And then he preached something so vicious that ten verses later many of them said this Jesus is demon possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?

In John 11, Jesus went to a funeral. His friend Lazarus died and when he saw his friends brokenhearted and confused in the shortest verse in the English Bible, do you know it? Jesus wept. God is so full of compassion. God cried. And then he flipped. You see this better in the Greek than our English Bibles, but it says that Jesus snorted with anger when he saw the intrusion of death. All these people who questioned his timing. All of these critics. He was so mad. He stamped over to the tomb and he demanded Lazarus come out. And when he did, his enemies tried to kill him for it.

In John 12, Jesus was tender with Mary when she anointed his feet but tough with Judas when he criticized her.

In John 13, Jesus was tender with Judas when he washed his feet but tough with Peter who was about to betray him.

In chapter 14, Jesus was tender with Peter and all the rest when he said my Father has heaven. It is like a room with many mansions. "I am going there to prepare a place for you. I am the way

and the truth and the life." And in the same sermon he said, and if you love me, you will do what I command.

In John 15, Jesus starts to talk about love. It was so good. I wish you had like two hours to listen to this. He said as much as the Father has loved me, that is how much I love you. That is insane. As much as God, perfect God loves Jesus, perfect Jesus, that is how much Jesus loves people. And same page in my Bible he says, and if you do not bare any fruits, you are like a branch that is picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

In John 16, Jesus predicted you are all going to abandon me and leave me alone. And in the very next verse he says, "I told you this so that you may have peace. Take heart! I have overcome the world."

In John 17, Jesus started to pray. And the disciples heard that the world would hate them yet the Father would protect them.

In John 18, Jesus allowed himself to be arrested. In love he allowed his hands to be tied but his lips were not. And so, he rebuked Peter for swinging his sword. And Pilate for the miscarriage of justice. And the Pharisees for mocking his trial.

In John 19, Jesus ended up on a cross. And there, looking down at the apostle John and Jesus' own mother, he said, John here is your mother. Mom, take care of my best friend. And then he died.

In John 20, he stopped being dead. He showed up to his grieving friend Mary. And in one of the most beautiful single words in the whole Bible he said to her, Mary, and her existence turned upside down. On the same page he appeared to his doubting friend, Thomas. And he said stop doubting and believe.

And in John 21, Jesus made breakfast. Fried up some fish on the beach. He invited Peter, the guy who had denied him three times. And he said Peter do you love me? Do you? Do you? And in between those penetrating words Jesus said Peter, feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. I am not done with you. I am going to use you to bless God's people. And then the gospel of John ends.

So, if someone asked you what side Jesus took, what would you say? The answer would be, God's. In every single chapter in the gospel of love, Jesus is tough and he is tender.

A couple of years ago I had the chance to speak at this like really swanky event. It was in Milwaukee, hosted at a local high school. I was asked to be the new lead speaker of this big media ministry called Time of Grace. So, all the Milwaukee supporters and people who had contributed financially they were coming to an event. I am talking like find my suit, put on a tie, practice a lot for the words. Make it a great first impression on this new audience, right?

So, I am driving down to Milwaukee and I am almost there. I am in the Town and Country and I looked down and I see a two-inch rip in the inseam of my pants. And I do not have back-up pants. Word to the wise if you are going to a swanky event, bring back up pants. I did not know what I was going to do so I got to the high school, I am examining myself like, can I stand behind the podium for the next two hours? Do I have to mingle and meet people? Do I like greet them sideways? Like very nice to meet you. I am a great first impression, Mike, you are the right guy for this job.

I really did not know what I was going to do until Dr. Ken Fisher walked into the room. Ken was and he still is the president of that Milwaukee high school. I do not know if I am reading him right, but he struck me as a man who is intelligent and assertive and energetic. He has the president's title which is one of the toughest positions in the whole school. The big difficult issues have to pass across his desk. And when he heard about my pathetic situation he said, Mike, follow me. And he clicks on the lamp right next to the big cushy chairs. And he sits down and the toughest guy in the room tenderly fixes my problem.

Sound like anyone you know? That was how Jesus was every single day. Just when you took a deep breath and thought you were on his side, he called you out. What are you doing? You are picking and choosing. You two are hooking up. You have been since before you started dating and you are worried about whose sexual ethics? Dude, you are judging her, you been objectifying women since you were 11 and got your first tablet. I will worry about her. You got to worry about you. Don't you remember what I said? Christians are not meant to pick the specs out of other people's eyes when there is still a plank in their own. Stop being hypocrites.

But just when you thought he was going to bounce he would say hey, can I pray for you? If anyone wants to be my disciple, they must deny themselves, pick up their cross and follow me. And I know that is going to be hard. I had a cross too. But I am worthy. Whoever loses their life for my sake, for the words of my Father, they will find life. You will never have to wonder or live with guilt or shame. And it will be a struggle. But when that struggle is over and you see my Father's shining face like I see it when I close my eyes, you will never regret this moment.

So friend, will you follow? I am worthy. Do you believe it? Then maybe the morning after you could go the local brunch spot, you stand up on a chair. You ding a glass like it was at a wedding. Say hey everyone, I am Jesus. And some guy would say yeah, right. So Jesus would multiply all the sausages on people's plates. Much rejoicing. And then they ask, hey, where are the Christians at today? Many people would raise their hand say, thanks for acknowledging me in public. Did you go to church today? And maybe Jesus would say who gives you the right? I brought a Bible, he would offer. You show me the page where this is permissible with my Father.

What, you think the Old Testament and the New got it wrong? You think the prophets, the apostles, the tribes, Israel, the churches, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Romans. You think that was a suggestion? You think I gave the sacraments for you to avoid them? You think the Holy Spirit commissioned pastors and teachers for you to stay distant from them? Stop sinning. Get connected. And by the way, I picked up the tab.

And he walks out the door and he finds the homeless guy on the bench outside. Bottle of cheap liquor in a paper bag. Point at the bag and says I know why you do it, but you got to stop. And instead of judging and bouncing like the average American, Jesus would sit there. And he would give the man something that no one had given him in years - time. He would scratch off his appointments with the big donors and the important pastors and Jesus would spend hours on that bench. And he would listen to the man. He would learn his story and his name. He would sympathize. He would weep. He would forgive him of his sins. He would promise him the spirit. He would hold his hand, put an arm around his shoulder. The man would never forget that moment because he had never felt like he had ever been in the presence of love like that.

And then maybe Jesus would come here, to our church. What do you think he would say? I think he would turn on the mic. He would look at you all and he would say, thank you. It is a beautiful day outside. Trust me, I know, I made it. And you are here. Thank you. You had a thousand reasons to do something else but you prioritize the people that I love. The word that the Spirit inspired. Thank you. When you sing, I heard that. When your prayers came from the heart, I was listening to that. Not everyone does that. Well done, he would say. He would look at all you moms with the little kids and he would say, there is great reward in heaven for you. You have not heard a whole sermon in how many months? But here you are because you are training up these little ones in the way they should go. I see you, he would say.

And if you see my homeless friend outside give him more than a wave. Give him your love. And let go of the grudge and give as much as God has given to you. And this world will know that you have been close to me because that is love. And I am love. I do not condemn you. That is what Jesus would do. Because that is what Jesus always did. He would be tough. He would call us out but he would never leave us there because he loved at the end of the day being tender with those who had tender hearts. The real Jesus is God. And God is love. And love is tough, but it is so much more tender. Let us pray.

Jesus, I thank you for being you. I thank you for not being a coward. You called us out all the time. That is hard for me to do, hard for us to do. The fact that you do it proves that you care about our future.

Thank you, Jesus, that in your ministry you did not value short term popularity over people's long-term eternity. Oh God, but so much more I thank you for heart, your compassion, your kindness, your patience. That you do not keep a record of wrongs. It is why we are drawn to you. It is why we stick with you even though this is difficult. Jesus, you call us to deny ourselves and take up a cross and it sometimes feels impossible. But not with you. Who else has the words of eternal life?

So, we want to walk with you today, God, so we can hear your voice, see your face and experience your love. Lord, you know that the word Christian means little Christ. And that is what I want our church to be. So, for everyone who is listening, help us to be both tough and tender. Help us to be a little bit more full of grace and truth so that we can be like Jesus and show the world the kind of love that has changed world.



And we pray this God because we need your help. We cannot do this without you. And we know because of what Jesus said that you love to hear the voice of your children. So, we pray today in powerful name of Jesus. And all God's people say, amen.