

## TRUE LOVE

### UNSELFIE

John 15:12-17 // Craig Smith

August 7, 2017

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**CRAIG:** Hey, welcome to Mission Hills. So glad you're here, whether you're in the big room or joining us online, or down in the middle. We're so glad you're taking this time. How many of you were here last week for our 75th anniversary celebration? Was that not an awesome time? Absolutely.

If you missed it, let me just give you the quickest little recap. Maybe the most important thing to take away from our time last week is that we spent our time looking back on 75 years of God's faithfulness and recognizing that what God has done really is just set the foundation for the future. He's not done doing it, and we're looking for the next 75 years with tremendous anticipation. I love the line from Joshua that we looked at, where Joshua called his people to remember everything that God had done up to that point. But then he said, "Tomorrow, the Lord is going to do great things," and we're fully anticipating that.

And I want to encourage you to do whatever it takes to get on board with whatever God is going to be doing in and through Mission Hills over the next 75 years. This is not a spectator kind of church. We don't believe that Christianity and following Jesus is a spectator sport. We all have our parts to play, and so I want to encourage you to take advantage of that next class that Carol was talking about. If you want to sign up for that, you can either do it on the app, you can do it online, you can just walk out to Welcome Center and say, "Hey, hook me up with that thing," and we'll help you figure out what it looks like to take your next step with Jesus.

Speaking about walking with Jesus, I want to look this morning at a passage where Jesus tells us some things about what it looks like to do that. It's maybe some surprising and maybe even some little difficult things. So if you've got a Bible and if you don't, grab one from the seats in front of you, I want to ask you to turn with me to John Chapter 15. And while you're turning there, let me just say this if I can, sometimes I find Jesus frustrating. I know you're not supposed to say that in church, but here's the thing. I love Jesus, but I don't think that loving Jesus and being frustrated by Jesus are mutually exclusive. It's entirely possible to love somebody and be frustrated by them, and Jesus does that to me.

And maybe there's no better example of Jesus frustrating me as the fact that he has this amazing tendency...Well, "amazing" is not the right word. "Annoying" is probably the right word. He has this annoying tendency to simplify things in a way that complicates my life. You know what I mean? He tends to not talk high theology. He tends to boil it down to really basic kind of stuff, but the essential truth that he ends up giving us really complicates my life. A great example, the Old Testament of the Bible has 613 separate commands. And then Jesus says this, John 15:12, "My command," singular, "is this. Love each other as I have loved you."

Now, understand, he's not getting rid of the other 613 commands. He's just summarizing them. We see him do this kind of thing a number of different times in his ministry. Another one is in Matthew 7:12, where he says, "My command is this." He says, "In everything, I want you to do to others as you would have them do to you." Right? You've probably heard that before. It's what we call the "Golden Rule." But then he added on, he said, "For this sums up the law and the prophets." That's his way of talking about the beginning and the ending of the Old Testament, the law, the prophets, the whole package.

He says, "Doing unto others as you would have them do to you, that sums up the entire Old Testament. All those 613 commands, they boil down to this one thing which is basically to love each other." Right? I mean, that's what he means when he says, "Do unto others as you'd have them do..." He's saying, "Love them." And he did this a number of times throughout his ministry. This passage we're looking at in John 15, he does the same thing again. He boils it back down to love. And on some level, that's



simpler, right? I mean, it's not nearly as many commands to keep track of. The problem is it's a much harder command in some ways, isn't it?

Six hundred and thirteen commands gives us a lot of boxes to check off, doesn't it? And I don't know about you, I love checking off boxes. I love it. It makes me feel so productive. I mean, sometimes I like to check off boxes so much that at the end of the day, I'll look back on my day and I'll think of things that I did that weren't on my to-do list. And I'll add them to the to-do list just so I can check them off, and just look at that big list of checked boxes and feel really good about myself. Checking off boxes makes us feel productive, makes us feel successful. And if they're religious boxes, it's even better because checking off the boxes makes us feel righteous.

And then Jesus comes and messes it up. He takes all of the boxes away and just gives us one. He goes, "At the end of the day, here's the only box you have to check off. 'Did I love others the way Jesus loved me?'" That's a hard one to check off, isn't it? Like, I mean, what kind of a day did you have where you're like, "Did I love others as J-...I did." Like there's some confidence that is required to be able to check off that box, isn't it? I mean, I find myself with my pen kind of hovering over the paper going, "Hmm. Did I? I kind...Well, maybe. Eh...Maybe I'll just do a little part of the check or..."

See what I mean is it's simpler, but it really complicates life and we do that. And I find myself asking Jesus, "What does that mean, Lord? I mean, what do you mean, 'Love others as you've loved me?' How am I supposed to do that?" And he goes on, and he begins to unpack it a little bit. Verse 13 says this, he says, "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." He says, "That's the definition of love, is just being able to lay down one's life for one's friends." Now, I [inaudible 00:06:03] warn you about something because if you've been coming to church for a while, if you kind of know the lingo and some kinds of things we tend to talk about, there's something in that verse that often gets us off track.

We see Jesus talking about laying down one's life and we go, "Oh, yeah. I get it. He's talking about the cross. He's talking about the crucifixion. He's talking about the time that he literally laid down his life to pay for the sins of the world and to save us." So we go, "Oh, yeah. This is what Jesus is going to do." But the problem is Jesus isn't asking his disciples to look forward. I know that because he didn't say to them, "Here's my command, to love others as I'm about to love you. Love others as I'm going to love you." He's not asking them to look forward to the cross. He's actually asking them to look back. He uses past tense. He says, "Love others as I have loved you. Already done. You've already seen it. You've already been watching me do it."

And so that requires us to go, "Okay. Wait a minute. What kind of a life had they seen Jesus live up to this point?" And we realize what Jesus is calling them to do is to remember, "Do you remember how I laid down my life by sacrificing my time to be with people, to the point that my family came in there worried because I didn't have time to eat, because I was spending all this time helping people? Do you remember how I laid aside preferences and those kinds of things so that I could use my resources to bless others to bring healing and help? Do you remember I laid down my glory and my honor, and all the rights and the privileges that were due to me as the Son of God, in order to come and to enter into the mess of this world?"

See, Jesus isn't asking them to anticipate what he's about to do. He's asking them to remember what he's already done. He's asking them to look at the life they've already seen him live. He says, "I want you to love others in the way you've already seen me doing it. Because greater love is no one than this, it's to lay down your life for your friends." Here's the thing. If there was one word that summarized Jesus's life, that word would have to be "selfless," wouldn't it? If one word could somehow encapsulate what Jesus was all about, that word would have to be "selfless." If there's one verse that really captures Jesus's heartbeat, I think it would have to be the one you hear me talk about a lot.

Because for me, I think this is the pillar of the Christian faith, that is the foundation of following Jesus. It's Mark 10:45 where he said, "The Son of man," which is his favorite title for himself. He said, "The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, to care for others." I mean, if you could imagine with me for a minute...I don't know what it would look like, but if you could



Imagine if you could take the perfect picture that somehow captured visually everything Jesus was about. If there could be one single snapshot that encapsulated Jesus's life and ministry, and if you could take it and you could post it on Instagram, what do you think you would call a picture like that?

The only thing I can think of is that you'd have to call it an "unselfie," and I realize that's not a word. But the word "selfie" wasn't a word until just a couple years ago, right, and you know what selfies are, right? I mean, we now have these phones in our pockets with cameras that we can just pull out and we can get them pointed around towards us. There's even a button for it, right? "Stop looking at the world. Look at me." Get ourselves in the frame, snap that shot, it's a selfie. Jesus is almost the exact opposite of that, isn't he? His life consistently demonstrated a willingness to take himself out of the frame in order to put the focus on other people. And it's not just the life Jesus lived, it's the life that he calls us to live.

He said, "This is my command. This is your one checkbox. Love others as I have loved you." You want to know what that love is? Greater love is no one than this, to lay one's life down for one's friends. And that's a heavy command, right? It's a scary command. Some of you, it's scary because you've done it and maybe it hasn't gone all that great. Maybe you've been taken advantage of and you feel like you kind of were sucked dry in the process of trying to do that. Maybe some of you, it's you're living scared right now, just because you don't feel like you have what it takes just to get a handle on your own life, let alone get involved in other people's messy lives.

And so to hear Jesus say, "Look, this is what love really is. This is the love I'm inviting you to show to others. It's the love that I showed to you," we kind of go, "I don't know about that." And we begin to look for ways to kind of get out from underneath the weight of that command. And I think one of the ways we naturally begin to try to kind of distance ourselves from it is we look at what Jesus said here. He said, "Greater love is no one than this, to lay one's life down for..." Oh, for one's friends. Okay. That's easier. Because friends as we think about them, friends are people who feel the same way about us as we do about them, right? I mean, friendship, it's about back and forth, it's about two-way streets.

"So Jesus," we go, "okay. So you're telling me that I'm supposed to live sacrificially. But I'm only supposed to live sacrificially for people who are willing to sacrifice for me, right?" I'm only supposed to lay my life down for somebody who's willing to lay their life down for me. That begins to feel manageable, doesn't it? "Okay. That is what you meant, right, Lord? Right? Please?" But it's not, and we know that it's not because Jesus didn't just lay his life down for people who were willing to lay their lives down for him. He didn't just invest in people who were willing to return the favor back to him. Throughout his life and certainly when we get to the end, to the crucifixion itself, we don't see a man who's only willing to lay himself down for people who are willing to return the favor.

In fact, Paul in Romans said it this way, he said, "This is how God demonstrates His own love for us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Sinners" is not a synonym for "friends." When Paul said, "When we were yet sinners, Christ," I'd be saying, "While we were still living as enemies of God, we were still living in hostility, while we were still going the opposite direction from God, that's when Christ laid his life down for us." Apostle John in one of his letters says that we love because He first loved us. He didn't love us because we loved Him. He loved, which somehow did something in us that began the relationship. It began to lead us into a relationship where we were able to begin to love, but He started the whole thing.

He clearly means something very different by "friends" here. Jesus calls "friends" even those people that he longs to have a relationship with, even if that relationship hasn't been begun. And I feel like we need to pause for just a moment here because what we're seeing here is in many ways, it's the heartbeat of the Christian gospel. The gospel, the good news of Jesus is that God did what was necessary to begin a relationship with us before we wanted anything to do with Him, before we'd earned anything, before we checked off enough boxes.

Jesus began a relationship that started with a gift, which is kind of an awkward way to begin a relationship, to be perfectly honest. Like if you're just getting to know somebody and the very first time you meet them they're like, "Let me give you an expensive



gift.” You’re like, “You’re weird. Please, don’t do that. It’s awkward and I don’t know what to do with it.” Right? But that’s exactly how God looks to begin this relationship. He starts with a gift. He says, “Here’s the thing, I know you don’t love me. I know you can’t check off enough boxes. I know that you’ve sinned. I know that you’ve done wrong. I know you’d prefer to be left on your own. I know you’d prefer to be left on your own. But here’s the thing, I love you too much to leave you there. So here’s a gift,” and He puts this gift down.

It’s the gift that is Jesus, who went to the cross and he took all our wrong on himself. He died in our place and he rose again, and he says, “All you have to do is open the gift and I’ll begin a life with you that goes on from now for all of eternity.” And I’m sharing this, this morning, because I think a lot of us who call the Church “home” run the risk of having assumed that we’re in a relationship with Jesus on the basis of the wrong things. We’re still trying to check off the boxes and, “Here’s the things that I’m not doing and I’m doing these things, one of which is that I come to church and I play the game.” But those things don’t begin the relationship with Jesus.

And so I just think it’s really important that every now and then we pause and even if you have been coming to church for a long time, you ask yourself the really difficult question, “Have I really accepted the gift?” And if you’re here today and you’re realizing right now, “I haven’t. I don’t really have that kind of relationship with Jesus,” I want to give you the opportunity right now to do it. It’s very simple. It’s no more complicated than unwrapping a gift that’s been handed to you. Here at Mission Hills, we often use these kind of five pieces to it because they’re really simple. We say you have to say to God, “I’ve done wrong. I’ve sinned.” You can use that language if you prefer, and then we say, “I’m sorry for it.” And we say, “Jesus, thank you for dying for me. Jesus, thank you for rising. Come into my life. I accept your gift.”

And what I love about that is that it’s a perfect illustration of what it looks like. Because when we say, “I’ve done wrong. I’m sorry. Thank you for dying. Thank you for rising. Come into my life,” what happens when we bring those together is we grab ahold of the gift that Jesus is offering that is the foundation, is the beginning of the relationship he calls us to. And if you’re here today and you realize, “I don’t really have that. I’ve never taken hold of that gift in that way,” I want to give you the chance to do that right now. I’m going to ask everybody to close their eyes, to bow their heads. And if you know you don’t have that relationship or if you’re not even sure if you have that relationship, be sure right now.

In your heart, simply say to Jesus, “I’ve done wrong. I’m sorry. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for rising. I accept your gift. Amen.” And if you prayed that for the first time today, I want you to understand that you have just begun a relationship that’s going to go on for all of eternity. It’s a relationship that begins to change everything about you and everything about the way that you think about life. It’s a relationship that brings you into a friendship with God, that is defined in ways that I think you might find a little surprising, but also incredibly encouraging. Look at how Jesus goes on in this passage. He says this, he says, “You’re my friends if you do what I command.”

And I’ll be honest, that sounds a little weird, doesn’t it? Like can you imagine talking to somebody and asking them, “Hey, what do you think the essence of friendship is?” and they’re like, “Total obedience.” That does not feel like friendship in the way that we think about it, right? But you need to understand that Jesus is not talking about friendship in the sense of like hanging out with equals or that sort of a thing. Jesus is talking about bringing people on the inside. He’s talking about bringing people in, so they begin to share in the vision for what he’s doing. He’s making them a part of a mission.

He says, “My friends are those who do what I command.” Don’t misunderstand what he’s saying there. I think sometimes what happens is we look at this and we begin to turn it back into the box-checking process. We go, “Okay. So if my friends are those who do what I command, then as long as I check off the boxes then I’ll be your friend, right? So all the things that I’m not supposed to do and things I’m supposed to do, I’ll check off.” But you’re missing the point again. We’re getting off track of it. Jesus isn’t saying, “These things are what make you my friends.” He’s saying, “These things are what reveal that we are friends.” He’s saying, “These are the things that come out of you when you’re my friends.”



It's a little bit like this, it's like a pregnancy test. That's a little awkward for a Sunday morning, I know. But like you need a pregnancy test, like we went through it and I remember Coletta got the little stick, and she did what you're supposed to do, I'm not going to go into those details. But what you're looking for is you're looking for it to turn into a plus sign. And you could very easily say, "You are pregnant if the plus sign appears." Right? It's a very natural way to say that. But nobody means, "As soon as that plus sign appears, woo, you're pregnant." It didn't make you pregnant, it just revealed that you were pregnant and Jesus is saying exactly the same thing here.

He's not saying, "Checking off the boxes makes you my friends. He's not waiting for you to go, "Okay. Have you checked off enough? You've got a few more to do and then we can talk." No, no, no. He's saying that, "If you're my friends, it's going to come out naturally by you following my commands." What he was saying basically is this, "Keep in mind what the command is." Right? There's just one. What is it? "To love others as I have loved you," that's the command he's talking about. And what he's saying is that the best evidence, the best evidence for friendship with Jesus is our sacrificial love for others.

It's not what makes us friends of Jesus, but it's what reveals that we're what he calls "friends," and he means something very special by this "friend" language. He says this, he says, "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." You understand, Jesus is not saying that friendship is based upon equality. His idea of friendship here is, "I'm bringing you inside. I'm pulling you behind the curtain. I'm bringing you into my circle of confidence. I'm making you a part of what I'm doing."

He says, "Servants, they don't know what their master's business is." They don't know what the whole big picture is and they don't need to. With the servant, if the master says "jump," the servant's only question is what? "How high?" The servant does get to ask, "Why am I jumping? This is awkward." That doesn't get to happen. But with friends, you don't tell them what to do. With friends, you invite them to be a part of what you're doing. Does that make sense? See, servants are given commands to comply, but friends are given an invitation to cooperate.

With friends, you're being told, "Here's what we're doing, here's what we're in the business of and I want you to be a part of this. I want you to have a place in this." So there's an invitation to participate. And what we need to understand is that Jesus wants a relationship with us that turns compliance with commands into cooperation with his mission. Grab ahold of that. Because if you're the kind of person who's begun a relationship with Jesus, but you're still basically going, "I have to check off the boxes," you're missing the heart of it. Jesus wants a relationship that changes compliance with commands into cooperation in his mission.

Yeah. I mean, morality and ethics, and all those kinds of things that are revealed as the scripture, they're going to be part of our lives. But it's not because we're being told, "Jump," and we're just going, "Okay. How high?" "Don't," and we're going, "How... Okay." No. He's saying, "All of those things are a part of bringing you into the family business. I want you to be part of it." And so he goes on and he says this, he says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and I appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. And so that whatever you ask in my name, the Father will give you." He's talking about the family business. He's talking about what he's inviting us to be part of and it's such a loaded passage there.

There's so many pieces of it and it's amazing how easily we can get off track of it. He says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." And if you've been coming to church for a while, you might be aware that there's a sort of ongoing debate that Christians have between Calvinism and Arminianism. Some of you are getting excited. I can see it. It's a debate between predestination and free will, and stuff like that. And people love to talk about this verse and go, "Jesus is totally a Calvinist because he said, 'Look, you didn't choose me. I chose you.' Total Calvinism." And here's the thing, no.

Now, here I'm actually on the Calvinist side of things, but this isn't a verse that supports that position because what Jesus is doing here is very practical. This is real life, nitty-gritty stuff. He's looking at a group of disciples who followed him and he says, "I want you to remember something. Don't ever lose track of this. You didn't come looking for me. I came looking for you." And





here's why that's important, because it's completely upside down from the way that teachers in the 1st century selected disciples.

See, in the 1st Century, the Rabbis had the position of power. They were centered in the frame, and one of the ways that they maintained that focus was that they did not select disciples. They didn't go looking for disciples. That would have been beneath them. They stayed where they were and the people came to them. And they petitioned them and they said, "Hey, can I be your disciple? Would you petition me? Or would you accept me? Could I follow you?" And then the Rabbis got to say or they kept the power, they kept the focus on themselves. It would have been beneath them to go out looking for disciples. That's humiliating, right?

If you're a Rabbi and you've got disciples, they're like, "Where did you get your disciples?" you're like, "Well, I had to go looking for them," well, that's insulting. It's demeaning. It's beneath them. But that's exactly what Jesus did. Jesus didn't wait for people to come to him. He went looking for people and he said, "I want you to follow me." And the other thing that's radical is that he went looking for the wrong kind of people. He went to fishermen and he said, "Lay down your nets and come with me. Yeah. I know you don't have position, power, privilege, or families, nothing special, but I want you." He went to tax collectors and he said, "Come with me." So in every way, Jesus kind of flipped this upside down.

And not only does he say that he went and found them, that he chose them, but he also goes on and he says that he appointed them, and I love that word. It's a good translation. But there's a nuance to the Greek that I want to make sure we don't miss, and that is that the Greek word there is a word that always speaks about deliberate forethought. It always speaks about sort of, "I'm thinking through how this is going to work out and how these pieces are going to fit together. There's a very clear intentionality to it." And what he means is, "Look, I didn't just find you tagging along behind me and look around and go, 'Seriously, you're going to follow me? Okay. I guess we need to find something for you to do.'"

He said, "No, no, no. I went looking for you and I appointed you because I've got things that I want you to do. I've got things that I designed for you to do. I've got things that you're custom-built for." And what we need to understand and I think a lot of Christians don't quite grasp this, a lot of Christians end up spending most of their Christian life feeling like they're Jesus settling, that they're part of the kingdom because Jesus went, "Oh, okay. Fine." They feel like they're just sort of tagging along and you need to understand something incredibly important that Jesus is saying here, Jesus never settles for us. Do you hear me? Jesus never settles for us. He selects us to play a part that we're custom-built for.

I want you to grab ahold of this. If you're sitting in these seats today, if you're listening to this online, you need to understand that this moment is not an accident. This is not a moment where Jesus went, "Okay. Fine. I'll see what I can do with this moment." No, no, no. God ordained this particular moment. You're in these seats, you're hearing these words because Jesus has selected you. He's come looking for you because he's got a part for you to play that you're custom-built for. Everything that you've been through up to this moment, your experiences, positive and negative, the way you've been wired, all of these kinds of things come together. Jesus says, "You're perfect for what I want to do through you."

He never settles. He always selects, and he selects us for a purpose that's bigger than we could even begin to anticipate. He goes on and he says, "I appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." He says, "The things that I've selected for you to be a part of, they're going to allow you to produce fruit." But not just any fruit. Fruit that does what? Fruit that lasts. See, the tasks that the world gives us, they're tasks, they're impacts that we have that ultimately and very quickly fade away into insignificance. We're forgotten. But that's not true of the things that Jesus is calling us to be part of.

It's the difference between birthday candles and sparklers. You know what I mean? Like birthday candles, that's the weakest flame I've ever seen in my entire life. I hate birthday candles. Because you stick them in the cake and then you light them, and then I always do it in my kitchen, so then I have to carry it out. And as soon as I pick it up, I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. I have to walk like this fast or I'll blow them out." I can't breathe on it because at the slightest wisp of air, they're extinguished. It's a little



different than sparklers though, right? You can't blow sparklers out.

I've never used them on birthday cakes, but I'm thinking about it. Linay [SP] has got a birthday coming up in October. But you put sparklers in the cake and you light them, it doesn't... You can run, you can breathe, nothing is going to blow those things out and that's the kind of things [inaudible 00:26:57]. He says, "I didn't just select you to bear fruit, I selected you to bear fruit that will last." He selected us to be part of things. We're custom-designed for things that he intends us to do that will bear fruit for eternity, that will literally have an impact that will reverberate and echo for the rest of forever.

And I realize that our response at that point is, "I don't have what it takes to do that," and you're right. But that's why he says, "And so that whatever you ask in my name, the Father will give you," which unfortunately is probably one of the most mistaught verses in all of scripture. And maybe you've heard a teaching on it, maybe you haven't, but I've heard a lot of teachings on it over the years and an awful lot of them seem to revolve around this kind of idea. "Okay. So Jesus said, 'If you ask for anything in my name, it'll be done.' Therefore, what he's saying is, 'Whatever you want, as long as you say, 'in the name of Jesus' and believe it enough, you'll get it.' So if you want a Maserati, pray in the name of Jesus and believe that you will receive it, and a Maserati shall appear."

Guess what? It doesn't work. I know. But you know why it doesn't work? It's not because I wasn't believing hard enough. It's because that's not what Jesus is saying. That interpretation, which is interesting. Because that interpretation that says, "Ask for anything you want and it'll be done," that's a selfie shot, isn't it? That's me in the center of the frame. But that's not what Jesus is talking about here. There's a couple things that are important to keep in mind if we're going to understand what he says here properly. And please understand, I am not saying that this is not a powerful promise about prayer. It is absolutely an incredible, unbelievable promise about prayer, but it's about a very particular kind of prayer and that's critical.

Two things. First, he says, "Ask for anything in my name." And that's not just the words that we tag on at the end of a prayer. Okay? "In my name," it's representation language. It's the same kind of language that the tax collectors would use. They'd go into a town and they'd say, "In the name of Caesar, you have to pay this tax." And people would pay it because they understood that when he was saying, "In the name of," what he was really saying is, "All of the power and authority of the Roman emperor is behind me. You're paying him, not me. I'm just his representative." And so when Jesus says, "If you ask for anything in my name," he's talking about those things that we ask for that represent him that accomplishes purposes in his mission.

Maseratis in everybody's driveway, not really on the agenda. You're like, "But I would drive it for you, Jesus." Yeah. Okay? "In my name" means this is a very particular kind of prayer. It's a prayer that accomplishes his purposes. It's a prayer that allows us to participate in his mission. And what's his mission? What does it look like for us to participate in his mission? "Love others as I have loved you." And I understand that that's a scary command. I feel the fear of it. I feel the fear that comes when I realize, "Okay. I could be drained dry." I feel the fear that comes when I go, "I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to help. I don't know how to bless. I don't know any of that."

And Jesus goes, "It's okay. You don't have to." You don't need to have all the research. You don't need to have all the answers. Because if you'll join me in my mission of loving others sacrificially, I will open the floodgates of heaven to you so that you have what you need to bless them." You understand, what Jesus is saying here is that when we join him, when we join Jesus in his mission of loving others, he begins to give us access to the resources that we need to truly bless them. That's the promise. "Ask for anything in my name, ask for anything in your pursuit of loving others as I have loved you and it will be done." And I'm going to go out on a limb and guess that you probably haven't heard that particular interpretation before, which is pretty sad.

And it's not always said. It's tragic, because what it means is we've taken this promise and we've flipped it almost upside down. I mean the way we talk about this is so often about us getting what we want. But if the question is, "How can I get what I want?" we're not joining Jesus in his mission because Jesus's mission is not about us. And I realize that what I'm saying is probably a little bit surprising, that he's promising to give us access to the resources that we need to truly bless others, to



truly have an impact on others that will reverberate through eternity. And there's a big part of us that goes, "That's really disappointing. That's not what I want that prayer to be about. I want that prayer to be about how do I get what I long for? How do I get my prayers..."

And we even begin to go, "Okay. Come on. Maybe that's not what Jesus is really getting at. Maybe he's turned a corner. Maybe he was talking about loving others, but now he's changed topics. Now he's dealing with something else. That'd be really convenient, wouldn't it?" Yeah. It would, but it's not acceptable because look at how he ends this little passage, this little teaching time. Verse 17, "This is my command, love each other." He starts with "love each other," he ends with "love each other," and the whole package is all about loving others in the way that Jesus has loved us.

And we go, "I don't think I can do that." And he goes, "Yes. You can because I'll do it through you." "I don't think I have what I need." "Yes. You do." "I don't know what to say." "Don't need to. Just get on board and you'll see the floodgates of heaven open in your pursuit of loving others as I have loved you." What Jesus is doing, make no mistake about this, is because he wants us to be friends, because he wants us to be partners, is that Jesus invites us, he invites us to join him in his mission of loving others sacrificially. Jesus invites us to join him in his mission of loving others sacrificially.

And I realize that's a hard thing. He promises that he'll give us everything we need. But more than that, I'm going to suggest to you that the Bible continues to go on and on a regular basis to unpack what it looks like to actually embrace this mission. And over the next three weeks, what we're going to do in this Unselfie Series is we're going to look at what the Bible says very specifically about embracing his mission, accepting his invitation to join him in his mission of loving others sacrificially in several areas of life.

And so next week, we're going to talk about what does it look like to embrace that mission with our time? The week after that we're going to talk about what it looks like to embrace that mission with our talent, the abilities that God has given us. And then I'm just going to go ahead and give you this advanced notice, Week 3, we're going to talk about what it means to love others sacrificially with our treasure, our money. I'm warning you, it's coming. We'll see what attendance looks like in three weeks.

But the reason we're going to do this for the next few weeks is because this is what it means to follow Jesus. This is the only checkbox he ultimately gives us, "Love others as I have loved you." So time, talent, treasure, we're going to push into that, looking for specific instructions so that we can begin to get ahold of specific things that allow us to embrace this mission. But over this next week, I have one piece of homework for you. It's a very simple, but an important question and the question is this, "What is my biggest obstacle to living the unselfie life?"

I want us to wrestle with it because we need to allow the Holy Spirit to do whatever work it is to unearth that thing, to get that thing out of the road, so that we can move forward in embracing this mission. And maybe for you it's fear, as we've talked about. Maybe it's pride. Maybe it's that your way of thinking about things is just way more in the world's camp than it is Jesus's camp, and Jesus has to change your heart in some significant way. But I want you to wrestle with God, asking him to show you what your biggest obstacle is.

And as he reveals that obstacle to you, ask him to do the work necessary to move it out. In fact, let's pray for that right now. Jesus, we thank you for your sacrificial love. We know that you loved us long before we loved you. And we thank you for this promise that you have chosen us, that you have appointed us, selected us to do things that will reverberate through eternity, things that will have an impact that will last forever. And that you promise us access to the floodgates of heaven in order to accomplish this mission of loving others as you have loved us.

Lord, we confess that this is counter-culture. We confess that it's not our natural selfish tendencies. We ask that you would do the work in us this week necessary to get those things that are going to be obstacles to that out of the way. We give you permission. We know you don't need permission, but you often wait for it. And so we individually give you permission to do that work in us to reveal to us those obstacles to living an unselfie life. In Jesus's name, amen.

