John 13 – 17

The full extent of his love

John
INTEGRATED BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
Introduction

The full extent of his love …

Of all the four gospels, none is so simple, nor yet as deep as is John’s gospel. Of all the events that John narrates, none gets so much attention as the night that Jesus spends with his disciples before his arrest. John alone gives this extensive report. Jesus knows what is about to happen, and in the course of the meal, he orchestrates the events leading up to his death, before speaking in earnest to his disciples. Much can be learned from what Jesus says, but why John’s focus?

The answer is given by John himself in his introductory remarks:

‘It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.’
As we shall see, these remarks refer not simply to Jesus’ washing of his disciples’ feet, but to all that he does and says that fateful night. Here, in these chapters leading up to Jesus’ death, we are shown the full extent of his love.

John’s comment should make us pause. Traditionally, Christians have always gone to the cross to see there the extent of God’s love for us. Doesn’t Jesus himself say that is in Jesus’ death itself that God the Father shows us the extent of his love for the world (3:16). But now John alerts us to something different. Here in the words and actions of Jesus, we see the full love of God the Son for his disciples, shown as never before. And because we, the readers, know what is about to happen, John allows us to view these events from a vantage point out of reach to the twelve disciples. We see what Jesus is doing, can imagine the pathos in the room, and can therefore appreciate with hindsight the import of Jesus’ words. John records this night for us - that we too, may know and grasp the full extent of Jesus’ love for us.

Take the time not to rush through these studies. John’s writes for us to read slowly, to saviour Jesus’ words. Approaching this too quickly will rob you of the time needed to absorb the impact of what Jesus shows us.

May Jesus speak to your hearts and minds as you realise afresh the full extent of his love.

Chris Jolliffe,
Study 1  Unless I wash you …

John 13
Pray for God to open your eyes.

1. When has anyone demonstrated how much they care for you? What did they do? What in particular motivated them to do this at that time?

2. Jesus and his disciples had journeyed to Jerusalem on foot to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was usually a meal of great celebration for the Jews, as they remembered God’s salvation of their ancestors long ago when he redeemed them with a mighty hand from Egypt, triumphing over Pharaoh and Egypt’s gods. This Passover meal, however, was marked with foreboding. John 13 narrates three moments of acute embarrassment for the disciples.

The first moment of embarrassment: Jesus’ washing their feet. Read verses 1-17.

- It would have been normal to expect a servant to wash the feet of travelers when arriving at their destination. The disciples had not organised this. This would have been embarrassing for them. But things became acutely embarrassing when Jesus, their host and honoured Lord performed the lowly task that none of them was prepared to do. What might have prompted him to do this? (Verse 4 begins with the word ‘so’. What has happened in verses 1-3 as the cause of Jesus’ action?)
Why did Peter do an ‘about-face’ in his response to Jesus’ demonstration of love? (v6-9).

What is behind Jesus’ statement that ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me’? (see Revelation 22:19, where the same Greek word is used)

What does Jesus mean when he tells the disciples that they must ‘wash one another’s feet’ (v14)? Why must they do this? (v15-16)

How does this impact you:
- in your ‘formal roles’ of serving at church?
- informally at church?
outside of church? (Gal 6:9-10)

2. The second moment of embarrassment: **Jesus passing the bread.** Read verses 18-30.

   - Jesus now returns to the topic he hinted at in v12 with his troubling qualification (‘And you are clean, though not every one of you ...’). Jesus is at pains to point out to his disciples in advance that he would be betrayed, in fulfillment of scripture. What might they have concluded of Jesus’ betrayal if he had not warned them in advance?

   - What did the disciples make of Judas? (vv22-30)

   - Was he ever a true believer? (see John 6:64-71, 12:3-6; 13:10-11,18; 17:12)
o Who is in charge here? (v18, 27)

o How does Jesus’ passing of the bread to Judas show us the extent of his love?

3. The third moment of embarrassment: Jesus dropping the clanger. Read verses 31-38.

o From v31, Judas’ leaving has now set into place a chain of events that will result in God glorifying the Son of Man at once. How does this change our perspective? In what sense could Jesus’ suffering on the cross be glorious? Is this where Jesus is going?

o What makes Jesus’ command new? (v33-35) How would people have known these men as Jesus disciples up until now?
How often we have promised great things to God, only to have gone back on our word. What two revelations does Jesus now make about Peter? (v36, 21:18-19; v38, 18:15-27). What effect did this have on the disciples? (14:1)

How has Jesus revealed the full extent of his love here?

What has Jesus shown you about how to love others? ... about why to love others?
Do not let your hearts be troubled.

John 14

In the opening hours of the night’s meal, to the disciples’ embarrassment, Jesus their master took on the role of a lowly servant and washed their feet. To everyone’s shock, Jesus then predicted that one of them would betray him, and called on Judas to do it quickly. He then predicted that before the night was out, Peter would deny him three times, and that he was about to go away to a place where they could not come. Their time together would soon be over. In the wake of these thunderbolts, amazingly, Jesus now turns to comfort his disciples, and continues to show them the full extent of his love as he prepares them for the events soon to take place.

Pray that God would open your eyes and humble your heart to understand what Jesus is saying here.

Read vv 1-14

1. At what times have you felt abandoned by God?

2. What three comforting thoughts does Jesus provide his disciples?
   1) v2a
   2) v2b-3a
   3) v3b
3. Often the image that springs to mind is of Jesus going and decorating our heavenly bedroom just the way we'd like. But is that really the place where he is going in his preparation of a place for us? (v28)

   - How does this give perspective on the events of the cross?

   - What is the greatest comfort about heaven? (v3)

Thank God that our true home is with Jesus, in the presence of the Father.

3. In verse 1, Jesus calls his disciples to ‘Trust in God, trust also in me.’ This instruction is key to Jesus’ comfort of them in their grief.

   - What is the main concern of the disciples? (13:37; 14:5)

   - How does Jesus answer this? (14:4, 6-7)
What is the significance of the three-fold use of ‘the’ (the way, the truth, the life) instead of ‘a’ (a way, a truth, a life) for Jesus’ call for the disciples to trust in him?

4. Undoubtedly for the disciples, who were steeped in the Jewish belief of only one God, Jesus’ call to trust in himself as well as the Father was difficult to swallow - as Philip shows: “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” In answer, Jesus must explain his relationship to the Father. Read again verses 8-14.

How does Jesus’ describe his identity with the Father:
- as identical in person (Jesus IS the Father)?
- as intimately inseparable in who they are and in what they do?
- as mutually indwelling each other?
- as subordinate to the Father?
Does this contradict Jewish monotheism (the belief that there is only one God)?

How does Jesus answer reinforce his command in 14:1 ‘Trust in God, trust also in me’?

In what sense might the works of Jesus’ disciples be greater than those of Jesus himself? (17:20, 21:25)

5. Jesus’ news of his return following his departure would undoubtedly have comforted his disciples. But what of the intervening period? Jesus now loves his disciples by teaching them of what will happen in the interim. Read verses 15-31.

At Jesus’ request, the Father will send a Counselor, the Spirit of truth. The word translated as ‘Counselor’ is the Greek title Paraclete, meaning ‘Comforter’, ‘Counselor’ (as in ‘Guide’, not ‘psychiatrist’), ‘Advocate’ and ‘Helper’.
Who exactly, dwells with Jesus disciples through the Holy Spirit? (v10, v18, v20, v23)

Is it right to talk about having a ‘relationship with God’, or a ‘relationship with Jesus’?

What is the specific role of the Holy Spirit for these 11 disciples? (v25-26). What is the implication for the authority of the New Testament scriptures?

In the interim, Jesus commands his disciples to love him by obeying his commands.

Read verses 15, 21, 23-24, 31, noting carefully their contexts. What point is brought made by tying together love and obedience in the context of the Spirit coming?
Are you loving Jesus? How?

Can you grow in your relationship with Jesus merely by study and reflection?

6. Stop and consider what you have learnt about the Father, Son and Spirit. What comfort does this give you? Take the time to praise God.
Study 3  Remain in me …

John 15

It had been quite a night. Knowing that Jesus was about to go to the Father, he showed his disciples the full extent of his love. He prepared them for the events about to happen - he washed their feet, predicted Judas’ betrayal and Peter’s denial, and then told them he would be going away. But Jesus also comforted his disciples - he told them of his coming again, of their need to love him through obedience, and of his Spirit who would come as their helper whilst he was away. Now Jesus takes things forward again, to speak of the life, prayer, fruitfulness, witness and opposition his followers will experience whilst he is away. Importantly, Jesus tells them how to thrive under such circumstances, and also assures them of his special relationship with them.

1. What do you think it means to ‘remain in Jesus’?

2. Read vv1-7

What questions do you have of this passage? In particular:

○ What does it mean to ‘remain in Jesus’?

○ Exactly what kind of fruit are we expected to bear?
Does any believer really enjoy the extravagant prayer promises in vv7-8?

How can someone in him be unfruitful?

How are these branches cut off and destroyed?

3. The answers to many of these questions hinge on the more important issue of Jesus’ relationship with his disciples, and how that reflects Jesus’ own relationship with God the Father. Read vv8-16.

How has the Father loved Jesus? (17:24) How has Jesus loved his disciples? (v9) How has Jesus therefore loved YOU?

What example does Jesus set us about how to remain in the Father’s love? (v10). What is the implication for us? (v9)

1 Please note - this is not a description of how someone becomes one of Jesus’ disciples, but rather stresses the responsibilities that being a disciple carries.
o What is the joy that Jesus has and wants us to have? (v11)

o How is our relationship with Jesus to be expressed? (v12-13)

o How is our friendship with Jesus different from our friendship with others? (15:14, 16)

o What, then, is the ‘fruit’ that Jesus’ disciples are to bear?

4. Having described the disciples’ relationship with Jesus as reflecting Jesus’ own relationship with the Father, and being fully aware of what he himself is about to suffer, now Jesus loves his disciples by preparing them for their own persecution that they will endure as his disciples.

Read John 15:17-16:4

o What ought Jesus’ followers to expect from the world, and why?
Rather than retreating into themselves, what are Jesus’ 11 disciples to do?

What of Christians today, who stand on the testimony of these apostles? (Eph 6:15, Philippians 1:14, Colossians 4:5-6, 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8, Philemon 6, 1 Peter 3:15-17)

How is Jesus’ warning loving? (16:4)

5. Think: how has God challenged you in your relationship with Jesus? ... expressed towards other Christians? ..... and the world? Pray about these things.
Study 4  Unless I go away ...

John 16
Whilst he was with them, Jesus had refrained from telling his disciples all that they would suffer from the world in his name. Now, however, on the eve of his departure, he has told them, and their hearts are filled with sorrow. What follows in this chapter is news of tremendous encouragement. First, Jesus speaks again of his sending of the Holy Spirit to the disciples, but this time speaks of the role of the Spirit in the world, and then of the Spirit making things known to the 11 in the future. Second, Jesus encourages them to take heart, for he has overcome the world.

1. Read vv5-15

  o Jesus chides his disciples that none of them has asked, ‘Where are you going?’. Yet we recall that the disciples did ask this question back in 13:46. Obviously, Jesus is not of short memory. What then, might be the nature of this gentle rebuke?

  o How is Jesus’ going away an advantage to the disciples? Are you convinced? Look up the following references to see the particular ministry of the Holy Spirit for Christians:
    ò Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Corinthians 1:22
    ò Acts 2:38
    ò Romans 5:5
Jesus has just spoken about the world hating the disciples. What encouragement does he now give? (v8-11)

What extra role will the Spirit have for the 11 remaining disciples, soon to become apostles? (v12-15)

How has Jesus showed them the full extent of his love?
2. Read vv17-33.
Jesus has been reassuring his disciples that, despite his imminent departure, every contingency has been planned for. The disciples will not be left alone, without help.

  o When Jesus says, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’, is he referring to his impending crucifixion (and then resurrection), or to his death, resurrection & ascension to the Father (and then his return)? (v20-22, 27)

  o The one topic which Jesus has not dealt with in his discussion with the disciples is the cross. In verses 17-18, the disciples are clearly confused. What blessings does Jesus promise the disciples after his resurrection?

     ò v23a2

     ò v23b-24

\[2\] (n.b. the verb means ‘ask a question out of ignorance’ rather than ‘ask for something’)}
Jesus speaks of a new relationship that the disciples will enter into with God the Father (v25-28). How is this different to what they currently experience, pre-cross and pre-Pentecost?

The disciples are stunned that Jesus is able to answer their questions before they ask them, a declaration of faith (v30). How does Jesus' qualification reveal a gap in their understanding?

3. Jesus has outlined all of this information (from chapter 14-16) to his disciples. In one way we have come full circle (14:1, 16:33). Think back over the previous studies. How has what Jesus told them given them peace? In what ways has he overcome the world?

Thank God for these things, and pray for a true perspective on the cross as one of Jesus' disciples.
Study 5  My prayer for them ...

John 17
When have you known that someone was praying for you in a specific way?

- What was the effect on you?

- What effect might it have if you were to know what Jesus was praying for you?

By this stage in the night, Jesus has finished speaking to his disciples ... almost. For whilst he now turns to prayer, and does not address them directly, they are within earshot. In this we share with the disciples the same encouragement from overhearing Jesus’ prayers. Here in this chapter we are privy not only to Jesus’ prayers for himself and the 11 remaining disciples, but for us also. Of all the things that Jesus’ has said thus far (17:1), this is the capstone. And according to Jesus, the reason he allows us to hear is that ‘they may have the full measure of my joy within them.’ (17:13).

Pray that the Lord would fill you with his joy through this study.
Jesus prays for himself

1. Read 17:1-5

   - How does Jesus think of the time of his death, now at last upon him?

   - In a nutshell, what is the burden of Jesus’ prayer for himself?

   - What is Jesus’ reason for praying this? (v2-3). How are these things connected? (John 3:16)

   - How then, is Jesus’ prayer for himself a prayer also for us?

Jesus Prays for his Disciples

2. Read 17:6-19

   - In verses 6-10, Jesus ‘reports back’ to the Father about the success of his mission concerning the remaining 11 disciples (c.f. v12), soon to become apostles. What might the disciples have gleaned listening to this prayer?
Is Jesus God’s gift to them, or are they God’s gift to Jesus? For what purpose?

What does Jesus pray for the 11 disciples? (v11-12, 14-15)

The 11 are to be ‘sanctified’ (v6 - NIV translation ‘revealed’, v17,19) - that is, set aside from the world, made holy, for a particular purpose. What relationship do they now have with the world? (v6, v11, v14, 15, 16, 18)

What is the implication of all of this for us, who have received the testimony of the apostles in the pages of scripture? (Luke 1:1-4, 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 John 1:1-4)
Jesus Prays for us

3. Stop and think. If you could guess what Jesus would be most concerned to pray for us, what would it be?

4. Read 17:20-26
   - How does Jesus describe the unity he desires for his believers? (20-23)
   - What is the purpose of this? (v23)
   - What is Jesus’ ultimate desire for us? (v24) What then is our ultimate blessing?
   - How does Jesus survey his ministry in the past, and in the future? (v25-26)
Stop and reflect.

5. How has God’s Spirit impacted you as you’ve listened in on Jesus’ prayers?

6. How has this prepared you for the events that follow, as Jesus heads to the cross?

7. Pray with joy, and give thanks that Jesus has showed you the ‘full extent of his love’ (13:1).