

John 15:1-16:4a - Love Hate Relationship

Besides the Sunday School answer (“Jesus”) and “my family and friends”, what one thing in this world do you truly love and what one thing can you just not stand? Be creative!

The passage this week is cut in two - Love: Jesus and each other, and, Hate: The world is going to hate you for it. There’s good president for this - the world hated Jesus and he was the perfect example of love.

Read John 15:1-17.

Israel was often referred to as a vine or a vineyard. Have a quick look at Isaiah 5:1-7. But Jesus is saying that instead of Israel, HE is the *true* vine. The Father lops off anything not bearing fruit and prunes back any branch that is so that it will bear more fruit. Anything not bearing fruit will be thrown into the fire. A branch cannot bear fruit unless it “abides” in the vine.

Q. From the context of the passage what does it mean to abide in Jesus?

When you search Scripture for both words you’ll notice that it’s heavy on ‘joy’ and light on ‘happiness’ as it is heavy on ‘sorrow’ and light on ‘sadness’.

Q. What’s the difference between joy and happiness? How different are they? What does ‘full’ or ‘complete’ joy look like?

Jesus reiterates in verse 12 what John also records him saying in 13:34 - “love one another as I have loved you.” Now Jesus immediately adds the words, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” Then he says, “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” With what follows Jesus levels the playing field - what he’s about to do the disciples should do too.

Hold that thought for a moment. Does verse 16 make you uncomfortable? “You did not choose me, but I chose you.”

Q. What do you think this means - that Jesus audibly called to the original 12 to follow him ... or does it mean something else?

If verse 16 is about the ‘elect’ or ‘predestined’ (those God knows will choose him) rather than about the 12 it blows this passage wide open to include the whole church for all time. In other words, we ALL should be ready to die for the sake of our *future* brothers and sisters WHO DON’T KNOW JESUS YET! They’re the elect but without us they can’t be!

Q. Does this make sense? Does God *need* us?

Read John 15:18-16:4a.

So then if this whole passage does apply to us, it’s an uphill struggle because Jesus says that as you love others the world will hate you!

Q. Can we use hatred by the world as a measure to how well we’re completing Jesus’ command to love one another as he has loved us? More to the point, should we?!

Fortunately Jesus didn’t leave us alone to complete his commandments, he gave the Holy Spirit. As a start he puts God’s joy in us (15:11) and also “he will bear witness about me” (15:26, see also 14:26). The Holy Spirit is God living *in* and *with* us.

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One of the implications of this passage is that trials will bring joy. I suggest to close that you pray for those in the group who are in the midst of trials - that God would open their eyes to see the pruning process. That's not to say that the trials become easy but that he's right there *in* and *with* us during these times and with hindsight after the event we can rejoice in the fruit which that time of pruning will inevitably have brought.

Bonus question (one for the road): How does one reconcile 15:22 with Romans 1:19-20?