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JOHN 14:15-31

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, as we think about your love, we are amazed. Oftentimes our love is more selfish, but yours is so big. That your love is based on commitment and loyalty to us, for which we're very grateful. Lord, we feel that love. We experience that personally. Not just the fact of that love, but also the feeling of that love is something that we enjoy. And so we thank you. It even prompts us, Lord, to even want to love you. We love because you first loved us. Give us hearts of love, Father, that would extend ourselves beyond our selfishness to others and give in your name. Give us a greater sense of awe because of your love that would motivate us to be the kind of people that you want us to be. As we look at that love today in your word, we ask that you would teach us and inspire us from your scriptures this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.

When I'm talking to children, I like to start this way: "I'm going to tell you a story. And this story is true. You know how we know it's true? It comes from the Bible." And the fact today is I'm going to share with you a story. This story comes from John 14. I would encourage you to open your Bibles to John 14 so you can follow along. Because I'm going to move through this passage a little bit at a time and try to draw some principles. So if you have your Bible, go ahead and write in it or underline some parts that will help us remember what we've looked at today so when you look back at it in the future, you'll remember these ideas.

The story takes place on the night before Jesus is arrested to be beaten, to be tried, and to be murdered on the cross for us. But we're at the night before. And in this night, He wants to talk to His disciples. He's just spending time with them because He really loves them a lot. And He wants them to know that He loves them a lot. But they're a little bit afraid. He's told them that He's going to be leaving their presence, He's not going to be with them. So they're a little concerned about this. The word even says that they are afraid. So Jesus wants to encourage them, He wants to refresh them, He wants to give them some solutions. Actually three ideas we're going to see in God's word today that help them after He's gone.

Now the reason this is important for us is because we don't have the physical presence of Jesus with us. We're in that same place where we are trying to get through this world, we're trying to understand it, and even not just survive but thrive in this world. Jesus shares these three ideas with His disciples that we need today in order to make it, in order to move forward. So in John 14 we're going to look at these from verses 15-31. As Jesus is explaining this and sharing this with the disciples, He's giving them principles we're going to use.

I want to start by looking at four verses, that is I want to read them publicly to you. Because it's these four verses that summarize the three ideas that are in this passage. Then we'll come back

and take it all apart. But I just wanted to take these four verses and ask you to stand with me, if you would, while I read these verses, and then we'll go in and dig a little deeper into the passage.

Jesus, speaking to His disciples, says this: *“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. And you’ll see down in verse 27 it says – Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

You may be seated.

There are three ideas there that we are going to look at today. These are your takeaways from the passage that God can use in your life to help you thrive in today’s environment. The first one is this idea of love and commands. We’re going to talk about those commands and love that is the motivation for them. The second thing we’re going to talk about is this advocate that will help you, the Spirit of truth. And the third thing, down in verse 27, we’re going to talk about this peace that God provides for us that’s different, notice, than the world’s peace. Those are the three ideas we’re going to look at today.

Let’s start with the first one. Do you see in verse 15 it says – *keep my commands*. If we look at the verses down to verse 25, we’re going to see the same idea mentioned four times, that love is connected to commands. Which means it’s important. Four times He’s going to say it. *If you love me, keep my commands* (in verse 15). Down in verse 21 He says – *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me*. And then He says in verse 23 – *Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching*. And verse 24 is the opposite – *Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching*. In the first two statements the word is *commands*. In the second two statements the word is *teachings* or *His words*.

Now I started pondering this idea of commands and I’m thinking well maybe it’s a list of rules that He’s talking about because Jesus gave us a lot of commands or teachings. I really don’t know if I like the word ‘rules’ because it seems so sterile. These commands that Jesus gave us and that we see in God’s word are primarily inner directive, things that we change inside of ourselves. Some of them look like they’re related to other people, like the one that says do not commit adultery. Well Jesus says – *You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.”* (That’s in the Ten Commandments.) *But I tell you, do not lust after a woman in your heart* because you’ve committed adultery already. You see He’s inner directed these principles. These commands are ways that will help us in our inner being to be stronger, to be able to address life.

So I thought about maybe a good word to replace ‘commands’ would be ‘life hacks’. That these are life hacks to help us know how to navigate through the challenges of life more effectively. Things you wouldn’t normally know. But because you know these life hacks it makes it easier. These are life hacks not for your house or for your car; these are life hacks for your heart.

Then I was feeling uncomfortable about the word ‘life hacks’ because they give the impression they’re suggestions. And they’re not suggestions. They’re commands. I was thinking maybe a better way to describe these commands would be an instruction manual. This instruction manual that lays out how to live. If we know the instruction manual then we can manage the equipment (our heart) more effectively and we could get somewhere with it in a way that would help it work right. I like that idea, the instruction manual idea, because it gives us the knowledge of what to do.

But it’s more than just knowledge. They are commands. These are expectations. These are things that Jesus says you need to do. So yes, I do believe these are life hacks, these are instruction manuals that God has hidden within every command of His. Some secret ingredient that will help us to be successful in life. I’m convinced of that. It’s not just a list of rules and regs that we follow. But hidden within them are reasons that we may not understand.

So you might obey God in a part of your life that you don’t even realize why you’re doing it, but you’re doing it because God said to. You don’t have to understand the life hack involved, but there is some benefit to it that makes things work better. These are commands.

And what’s the motivation for the commands that He’s talking about? It’s love. Love. *If you love me, keep my commands.* So He’s talking about the motivation for keeping these commands to be something rather significant. That there’s this love, this sense of commitment, this sense of value for God that says I’m going to obey Him because I love Him. *If you love me, keep my commands.*

I’ve been doing some work on this area of motivation from God’s word to try to understand what brings about change. Why do we do things? I’m going to show you some ideas that are incomplete, but maybe you can help fill them out in your own study. But in kind of a basic... right at the bottom we have a desire and we have emotion inside of our hearts. God uses (and we use sometimes) reward to appeal to desire and we use fear to appeal to motivation in order to get something done.

In God’s word we see God uses reward and punishment. I’m often teaching parents, though, that if you’re only using reward and punishment with children, you’re going to get yourself into trouble because you’re appealing to their selfishness. When you say to a child, “I’ll give you what you want if you do what I say,” over and over, they start asking the wrong questions about life. What’s the minimum I need to do to get my reward. They start doing it for some selfish reason. So really this lower form of motivation is based on selfishness.

I’m continually trying to help parents move to the next level with their kids, which is a sense of duty. This is responsibility. This is obligation. I have a responsibility to do certain things. That’s why I do them. They’re important, so I need to do them whether I want them, whether I get a reward or not. I do them because I’m responsible. That’s the obligation side.

And there’s a sense of accomplishment. So that when I’m finished with my to-do list, I like to mark off the last item before I throw it in the trash. Why do I do that? Because I feel good about marking off that last item. That’s something in my heart, this sense of accomplishment. I think

that's a higher form of motivation that we can have when we're coming to doing anything is to move from reward and punishment up to this sense of responsibly.

There are other things in the middle I'm working on. That's why they're blank there and maybe you can fill some of those in.

But notice we move up to another form of motivation that's much different. When you come to gratefulness, it's not about self. It's about others, what they've done for us, and then expressing gratefulness to them or to God. It's a higher form of motivation. Gratefulness is power and that's more lofty.

But the highest form of motivation, it seems from God's word, is love. *Greater love has no man than this, than a man laid down his life for his friends*, Jesus says. Jesus has this high form of motivation that even causes someone to be willing to die for them, as Jesus is describing His relationship with us. So that's what we're looking at here. When we're talking about love, we're talking about a most mature, high form of motivation in order to obey the commands. Think about that now. Because we don't just obey the commands because they're this obligation or this list to do or because we're experiencing this reward or punishment. We're doing it as Jesus is saying now, out of a motivation of love.

This idea of love as we take it on through the passage is going to be quite interesting. He says *if you love me, keep my commands*, but there's something special about this kind of love that He's sharing with us that's different than the love that everybody gets. Can I suggest that God might love more or make more love available to those that are responding to Him? I think that's what you're going to see in the passage. This is really intriguing.

We know that in John 3, the same book of the Bible, in verse 16 it says – *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*. So when a person responds to God, they receive this demonstration of His love for salvation.

If you haven't accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you want to do that. Because that's a response to God's love in general. But when you do that, look down here at verse 21. *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me*. Then notice what He says next. *The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them*. There seems to be something extra that's available to the person who's willing to commit themselves to Jesus. A greater reciprocal love, a greater sharing of relationship than just the whole world would have.

Look at the next verse because one of the disciples is wondering the same thing that I'm saying here when he says – *Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"*

There's something more available to you and to me when we share our love to God by obeying His commands. We're demonstrating our love. Obeying the commands comes out of that love, but when we love God, there's this reciprocal relationship that we enjoy and the Father shows

Himself to us in a way that's different than the world. There's more available to us as Christians than to someone who's not a believer. This more and this love relationship. The more that we have. And part of that is the teachings that He's giving us. The teachings are a gift. These commands, these teachings are a gift for us so that we can know how to live and we can respond in a way that's most appropriate to this world that He created. It's just really powerful, this idea of His commands.

But sometimes I don't know how to take the teachings of the Bible and apply them to my life situation now. Thus we come to the second idea that Jesus wants to communicate to His disciples. The first one has to do with love and commands. That's the teaching. That's the instruction manual, so to speak. The second one we see in verse 16. He's talking about the advocate. He says – *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.*

Now I want you to see that this advocate has some particular gifts for us or benefits for us. Notice it says He will *help you*. I need all the help I can get. Do you see that there? I just want you to see the words there. Verse 16 – *Another advocate to help you and to be with you forever.* If the instruction manual is the teachings of Jesus, then the advocate is the customer support. 24/7 customer support offered to us in order to know how to work the instruction manual so that our heart can function properly.

In fact look at the next verse. He says – *The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.* Wow. Maybe customer service is a good way to look at the idea of the advocate. But you don't have to call a number to get there. He's living in you is this idea that He's saying.

Now He's going to take this same idea and I'm going to jump now... See we're down to verse 25. I'm going to take you down the passage to verse 26 because we're continue to pick up this idea of the advocate again. He says – *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name...* Here's what He's going to do. He's going to take the instruction manual, He's going to take the commands, and the teaching, and He will teach you all things.

Oh this is really helpful. Because the disciples are feeling alone. Maybe they're feeling abandoned. They're feeling afraid that they're going to have to live life without God, without Jesus at least, and they're concerned about that.

I want you to know if you ever feel lonely, if you're feeling like "I can't do this, I don't have the strength to do this," that God has given you the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who's going to teach you how to do it. He's going to give you not only the teaching that we have, but we have the personal relationship. We have the knowledge and then we have the personal experience with the Holy Spirit to take the teachings and implement them into our lives. Insight to know how to do those things.

But it doesn't stop there because sometimes we forget. We forget to do this. So notice it says – *He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* So now the Holy Spirit is present in your heart if you've trusted Christ as your Savior. Now you have the

Holy Spirit present inside of you, He reminds you of the teachings. So if you spend time in God's word and you're doing that on a regular basis, then you've got the Holy Spirit living in you and He draws attention to those things that you've learned and reminds you, "Oh Scott, this is one of those times when you need to. Oh Scott, here's something you should do. This will help you. Remember to do this." So the Holy Spirit is present inside of our hearts to do these things and to help us.

Well I find those two ideas just really helpful for me. I'm sure they're helpful for the disciples who are feeling very concerned about not having Jesus presently with them because He would guide them and lead them. And now He's saying okay, I'm going to show you how to live. I've given you the teachings and I've given you the Advocate. And we too have those same benefits that we can enjoy.

The third idea that He's communicating in the passage is in verse 27. He talks about this peace and this peace is different than the world kind of peace. Peace is serenity, it's this tranquility that we can enjoy inside of our hearts. The world defines peace as absence of conflict, absence of trouble, absence of struggle. So if you go on vacation then maybe you can get away from your job for a while and have a little bit of peace. Maybe if you have children you're saying I'm going to get away for the evening and you have some peace and quiet. Or ship them off to grandma's house, then I'm going to have some peace and quiet. The world offers peace that's absence of something.

But God's peace is different than that. God's peace is this ability to have tranquility and serenity in the midst of trouble, of struggles, and even death. I say that because notice when Jesus is sharing this information with His disciples, in a few hours He's going to go through some very difficult experiences and He's going to be crucified. Yet He's talking about a peace that the disciples can have.

He says – My peace I'm giving to you. I'm leaving this with you. *I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* There's something that's part of the package of being one of God's kids, of having this love relationship with Him that allows us to experience something inside of us that's different than the world.

I'm sure that you're experiencing challenges in your life. When technology started coming onto the scene, it was thought that we would all work less hours. Now we have computers and they can do a lot of work for us. Instead of working forty hours (I don't know many people who work only forty hours now), but instead of working forty hours a week, we're probably going to cut our workweek back to thirty hours because of technology. We've got computers.

Well we have a problem. It didn't quite work out that way. Computers have allowed us to have a lot more information that is not even relevant to work, usually, but a lot more information in our lives that has caused our society to be more stressful. There's more anxiety now than there ever was before.

Jesus is saying I'm going to give you something that's going to allow you to live in life situations that's different than what other people experience. You're going to have this tranquility, this

serenity, this peace. My peace I'm going to give to you. Peace in the midst of the storm. To feel that calm in the midst of the challenges.

So you can practice that this week by loving the Lord and obeying His teachings and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in your heart and to receive that benefit of being peaceful today, even though life around you may be chaotic and problematic.

I want to challenge you this week to look at the teachings of Jesus and how God might have you be living a little bit differently. You're obeying those commands. That you would look at the Holy Spirit and say, "I just want that experiential knowledge. Lord, help me. Help me, be in me, do what I need to guide me in the course of this day." And that you practice the presence of God. You practice the peace of God in your life.

When you get up in the morning, it's not about your to-do list. For most people it's about getting these things done. These are things I've got to get done today. Yes, those are important. We're going to get the tasks done. But I have this bigger goal today. My bigger goal today is to love Jesus. To love Jesus with all my heart, to obey Him, to experience His peace. If I get off center because of my to-do list, I'm going to back off a little bit and say, "Lord, I love you. Lord, I need your help here. Would you give me that peace that's different than the world so that while I continue to work on my to-do list, I can experience the peace of God." You see, God has something very important that He wants for us. He wants to give it to us and that is Himself.

I want to take you back into the passage again. Let's go back up here to verse 23. Notice how He amplifies this in the passage. He says – *Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.*

I was struck by the idea of the word *home* because it's only used two times in the whole book as a noun. The other time it's used is in the beginning of this passage in John 14 when Jesus is talking about heaven. *In my Father's house are many mansions*, He says. Many dwelling places. Many places that are these homes. And He only uses the word twice in the whole book. Once he's referring to heaven and now he's referring to the present. He's saying when you love, *anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them.* There seems to be this extra measure of love you receive. *And we will come to them and make our home with them.* There's this presence that God wants us to have with us.

I was struck by the idea of home being mentioned there because home is a place of security. It's a place of safety. When I think about spiritual things at home, I think this world is not my home. I'm just passing through. I can hardly wait to get to heaven where my home is. And so that idea I understand. It makes sense to me. But that isn't what's being said here. The Father is saying I'm going to make my home with them. That God offers you and me much more than we imagine. When we love Him with all of our hearts, when we're obeying His teaching, we can experience the life coaching that the Holy Spirit does with us to guide us into truth and to remind us of the teachings. We experience that peace in a way that brings God's presence into our lives. Experiencing the presence of God in our lives every day.

I think there are two applications for us in general. One is that if you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you want to see how much benefit there is just looking at this one passage from God's word. I encourage you to make that decision to trust Jesus in your life. It opens up relationship, it opens some great things, and you want to love Jesus with all of your heart. And then there is the application for those of us who have already trusted Jesus. We want to take time in our lives to remind ourselves to obey the teaching, to love God, to love Jesus, to trust Him, and to experience that peace. That there's more that we can receive from God than we are already receiving. We want more of that. We want to embrace that in our lives.

Would you stand with me? Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] So Father, we are so grateful for your love. It just opens so many windows of our heart. It fills those places where we've experienced pain. We know that you want to bring healing into the disappointment, or the grief, or the challenges, the heartache, the hard work. Whatever it is we're experiencing, Lord, you want to fill all those places with your love. You want us to not only know that love, but you want us to experience it in personal ways. So Father, we want to open our hearts to you and ask you to do that deep in our lives and deep in our hearts. So Lord, speak to us now as we continue to demonstrate our love to you through worship, as we sing a song about worshiping you and loving you. Lord, we just ask that you would open our hearts to experience you today. In Jesus' name, amen.