



**Looking Inwards** (15 mins)  
*Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



**Looking Outwards** (15 mins)  
*Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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The Last Words Of Jesus  
**HG121: A New Commandment**

John 13:18-38

Home Group Study Notes

24 April 2016 - Revd Paul A. Carr



**PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.*



**Welcome** (10 mins)  
*Ice Breaker*

Think back to when you were a child, who did you want to be like? What ambition or aspiration was shaped by the example of someone else?



**Looking Upwards** (10 mins)  
*Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



## The Last Words Of Jesus HG121: A New Commandment

John 13:18-38

Home Group Sermon Notes

24 April 2016 - Revd Paul A. Carr

**1) Jesus predicts his betrayal, vs 18-30:** A couple of weeks ago, in 13:1-17, we saw Jesus demonstrating one of the greatest acts of humility, and servant hood, the world has seen as he, the Son of God, washed the feet of his disciples. However, what the disciples thought was going to be a wonderful celebratory Passover meal, became overshadowed with betrayal when Jesus said, vs18: "... *he who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.*" Now to show the bottom of one's foot to someone in Jesus' time (and in the Middle East today) is a mark of contempt. It's associated with the kick of a horse: vicious and unexpected. And so, whilst this term might not mean much to us, it had a profound impact on the disciples: *one amongst them would betray Jesus.*

Some people question how Judas could have done such a thing, especially as he was a follower of Jesus. He seemed to have been held in high regard by his fellow disciples, only an honourable and trustworthy person would ever be nominated to be treasurer. However, it seems to me that Judas wasn't a true believer, we see this in John 6:64-71. Judas may have followed Jesus as he travelled around; he may have witnessed the wonderful miracles he performed, but he didn't believe.

How close a person can come to salvation and yet be lost forever. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 7:21 (SOTM): *Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven ...* Jesus can never help those who persistently refuse his offer of life. Followers of Jesus are not always believers; and followers don't always put their trust in him. That's true isn't it? Are you a follower of Jesus or a believer in Jesus?

Jesus knew that death faced him (12:32-33), and the kind of death it would be. He knew about Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, yet nothing would stop him from fulfilling the purpose for which he came. He knew his destiny and he was steadfast in fulfilling it. It's important for us to remember that the death of Jesus wasn't the tragic end to a good man's life, a victim of circumstances, as it was portrayed in the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Jesus came to die, and his death was the time of his glory!

Jesus wanted the disciples to realise that events weren't outside of his control (13:3) that he was still in charge and God's purposes were being worked out. Furthermore, Jesus wanted them to realise who he really was, and to recognise what was playing out in front of their eyes was the fulfilment of OT prophecy, vs19: *I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.*

There's no doubt that Jesus loved his disciples. Despite their failures and foolishness, in spite of betrayal, in spite of their sins and shortcomings, Jesus loved those he had chosen, and he had a job for them to do. Whilst we may be tempted to give up on ourselves at times, he never gives up on us, and has a purpose for us to fulfil.

**4:** "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Are you able to love like this? What are the barriers to living this out on a daily basis?

**5:** What question would you have wanted to ask Jesus after the unfolding events in the Upper Room, and why?

**6:** Peter had many good intentions on the spur of the moment, but he often struggled to back up words with actions. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you've promised to do wonderful things for God but haven't fulfilled these, or have walked away when 'the going got tough'?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

**1:** Read John 6:64-71. What was the point that Paul was making in his sermon regarding Judas and the difference between someone who is a follower of Jesus and someone who is a believer in Jesus?

**2:** How can you help someone who is set upon a wrong course of action? (Consider Jesus' attitude to Judas).

**3:** Have you ever felt like giving up on your faith when you've been hurt or disappointed by other Christians? If so, what stopped from turning your back on the church?

Like Peter, we will sometimes find denial in our own hearts, and maybe even see betrayal of Jesus by those we thought were disciples. But the Lord never gives up on those who don't just follow him, but believe in him.

As the betrayal of Judas became clear, the disciples must have felt a personal sense of betrayal that one of their number should betray their Master. And, although Judas' betrayal doesn't take Jesus by surprise, we can see that he was deeply affected by it, vs21: "...*Jesus was troubled in spirit.*"

None of us are beyond being affected by the betrayal of those nearest and dearest to us in our churches. No-one puts this point better than John Calvin: *And indeed, it has usually happened in the Church in almost every age, that it has had no enemies more inveterate than the members of the Church: and therefore, that believers may not have their minds disturbed by such atrocious wickedness, let them accustom themselves early to endure the attacks of traitors.* In other words, you can have more enemies within the church than outside of it and you'd better get used to it sooner rather than later, otherwise it will destroy you.

I know of many a minister who has been reduced to a nervous wreck, and to prolonged bouts of extreme illness, because of the attitude of members their congregation. In fact, in a circle of friends from college, I'm the only one who hasn't had at least three months off for stress! Perhaps they are too sensitive; perhaps I'm too thick skinned, I don't know. Actually, sometimes I feel that I could do with a few months off, so don't push me over the edge!

I was talking to someone recently who said to me: 'I have been so hurt by Christians that I can't bring myself to go to church again.' Perhaps the church should carry a government health warning! There will always be heartaches and disappointments in the church. Why? Because it's full of imperfect human beings, who say the wrong thing and do the wrong thing – myself included. I know, over the years, that Christians have hurt me too. I've always said that if my faith was built on people I would have given it up as a bad job many years ago, but it isn't. It's built on Jesus and we need to keep that in perspective. Yes, sometimes believers will hurt us and disappoint us deeply, and no doubt we will disappoint them too, but the Lord, who doesn't give up on us, calls us not to give up on one another.

It happens and it's tragic, but it is foolishness to allow ourselves to be defeated by it and there is the real danger of hurt becoming a sin that keeps us away from the involvement and fellowship that we need most. Let us learn to forgive as we, in love, have been forgiven. Let us live by this wonderful 'new commandment' Jesus gives to us.

**2) A New Commandment, vs 31-34:** Do you remember, as a child, ever wanting to be like someone else? Did you want to be a fireman, or a dancer, or a Doctor? I can remember wanting to be a Train Driver (Casey Jones). I also wanted to be an astronaut; lift the FA Cup for Sunderland; English Rugby Union captain. Do you still have that desire today to be like someone else? I guess most of us no longer strive to be like other people. Most of us are just happy being ourselves. It's possible that our point of view has changed because those people who we once looked up to may no longer seem as "perfect" as we once envisioned. We have seen their flaws and have found them wanting.

Jesus offers us a chance to go back to those days of childhood innocence by giving us an opportunity to model our lives on someone we admire. And this individual has no flaws to create future disinterest along the way. Surely, Jesus is the only one who is worthy of our emulation. Jesus invites us to be more like Him when he said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

It's interesting to note that Jesus only gave this new commandment once Judas had left the Upper Room. I often wonder why that was. Did Jesus recognise that where there is unbelief God's work cannot be fulfilled? Was he saying that those who do not believe hinder God's work? I don't know, but it's certainly food for thought.

Love is a word that's on everybody's lips isn't it? There are more songs sung about it, more poems written about it and more escapist books romanticising about it than any other subject in the world. It seems to me that the world agrees that more love is exactly what we need to solve our problems. The Beatles sang: *All you need is love ...* and love, in the words of the Michael Ball song: changes everything.

***Love permeates through the whole of society, yet it's a love that has completely missed the mark.*** And yet, all the terrible array of evil that haunts and sickens us today, would disappear if we could teach people to *Love one another*. All the ugliness, child abuse, broken marriages, violent crime, the pornographic sex culture that we live in and the terrible drug traffic that destroys the lives of so many of our young people - all this would disappear if we learned to *Love one another ...* wouldn't it?

**3) We can't love in our own strength:** Love one another ... while it's good advice, it's not always easy to carry out is it. We are all realists and we all know how difficult it is to love unlovely people. Here is how one Christian writer described his problem in this area:

***Loving people is about the most difficult thing that some of us do.*** We can be patient with people and even just and charitable, but how are we supposed to conjure up in our hearts that warm, effervescent sentiment of goodwill, which the New Testament calls "love"? Some people are so miserably unlovely. That odorous person with the nasty cough who sat next to you in the train, shoving his newspaper into your face, those crude louts in the neighbourhood with the barking dog, that smooth liar who took you in so completely last week - by what magic are you supposed to feel toward these people anything but revulsion, distrust and resentment, and justified desire to have nothing to do with them?

But ... when Jesus comes into our lives we receive the Holy Spirit and through this, God enables us to be a different kind of person. He provides us with a new kind of love, the purest, deepest kind of love imaginable. Our love will become like Jesus' love. We love, not in our strength, but in the strength that comes from God. It's a fruit of the Spirit.

***Jesus' love was without respect of persons.*** He didn't love people who were nice to love, as we do. He chose to love the unlovely: people who were rejected, difficult to love, looked down upon, held in contempt by society. He loved them, not because he wanted the good feeling of love, but simply because they needed love, and his love responded. This is the characteristic of his love. It goes out to people who need love regardless of what they are like, no matter how dirty, leprous, hurtful, proud or arrogant they may be. It goes out because they need love, without respect of persons.

***Jesus' love was expressed in deeds, not just words.*** Love is ... not just talking about it, or singing songs about it, or calling yourself loving and not showing it. Love is expressed in deeds. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 25:34-35, when the sheep and goats are separated: *"Enter into the kingdom that has been prepared, because when I was sick you visited me, when I was hungry you fed me, and when I was naked you clothed me..."*

The Bible teaches that God's love is endless, boundless and unconditional the love that cost the life of His son. And it is this same sacrificial, costly, unconditional, everlasting, inexhaustible, overwhelming, unchanging, supernatural love that Christians should show in their relationship with one another. Now that's a challenge to all of us isn't it? John Ortberg, in his book: *'Love Beyond Reason'* writes: *Spirituality, wrongly understood, produces people who are smug, self-righteous, unable to love, unable to feel. It produces cold hearts, plastic masks, sad faces, inauthentic lives, and shrivelled souls.*

**4) To be or not to be ... ? (That is the question!) vs 36-38:** Peter, just like a child in school, and true to form, immediately shoots up his hand and asks a question. He always asked the questions people wanted to ask! I'm sure many of you have some deep questions you want to ask Jesus. Peter had a question, vs36: *'Lord, where are you going?'* It seems that Peter didn't hear anything about what Jesus had said about the new commandment. I'm always amazed at the patience of Jesus. If I'd been there I would have probably answered with a question: "Peter, when are you going to get the message? I have told you a dozen times where I am going. I am going to a cross. I am going to a tomb. I am going home to the Father." But Peter never heard.

Jesus doesn't rebuke him but replies: *'Where I am going you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.* And it would be a long time afterwards, probably 30 years or more, before Peter, then an old man, imprisoned in Rome, was led out and, according to tradition, was condemned to be crucified. So moved was he by the fact that he was to share the manner of his Lord's death, he insisted on being crucified upside down. Thus Jesus' words were literally fulfilled: *'Where I am going you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.'* But it seems to me there was another reason why Peter couldn't follow Jesus then: His love was the wrong kind of love. Vs37: *Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered; will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.*

There's no doubt that Peter was completely sincere when he said those words. There's no doubt he was thoroughly committed to Jesus and his cause. He was adamant that he would lay down his life and Jesus knew he meant it, but he also knew that it was a totally unreliable commitment. He knew that it came from natural affection, rather than godly commitment, and natural affection is never strong enough to handle the demands against love in this life. Good intentions in a secure room, after a good meal, are far less attractive in a darkened garden, with a hostile mob. At this point in his pilgrimage, Peter's intentions vastly outstrip his strength. It's true that we too, in the context of Christian worship with all its joy, can promise the Lord everything. *Oh Lord, I'll do this for you, I'll do that ...* Ever been there? I know I have ... many times! But it's a dangerous thing to do because God usually takes you up on your offer!

But it's when we are back at work or back in a difficult family situation, that our love and our obedience are really tested. That's the real crunch of how serious we are in our commitment to Jesus. Sometimes, just like Peter, our desire to serve God can outstrip our gifting, our ability and, indeed, our maturity to serve him. I don't know any Christian, who has been used by God, who hasn't had to go through that same process. We must learn that zeal alone will not do what God wants done and sometimes we learn this through failure, hurt, and rejection in order to know what it means to truly love and to serve Him.

**Conclusion:** These are the lessons that Jesus is teaching in the Upper Room. Here the secret of changing the world is revealed: *Love one another. As I have loved you ...* When Christians begin to act in this way, loving God with body, soul and spirit, loving our neighbours and our enemies, regardless of colour, race or class, then we will see society change for the better. The world may not always agree with us, they may not always come and join us - although many of them will - but they will know one thing: *Such people have been with Jesus.*