

Gospel

John 15:12-16

What I command you is to love one another.

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples:

¹² ‘This is my commandment:

love one another,
as I have loved you.

¹³ A man can have no greater love
than to lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends,
if you do what I command you.

¹⁵ I shall not call you servants any more,
because a servant does not know
his master’s business;
I call you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.

¹⁶ You did not choose me,
no, I chose you;
and I commissioned you
to go out and to bear fruit,
fruit that will last;
and then the Father will give you
anything you ask him in my name.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Looking at the Text

G-9 John 15:12-16

What I command you is to love one another.

The Gospel of St John

Central to the gospel of St John are a number of themes. Scholars divide the gospel into two 'books' — the first being 'the book of signs' all about Jesus' public ministry, i.e. the miracles or 'signs' he did, pointing not to himself but to God the Father, and the second, known as 'the book of Glory', showing us Jesus and his relationship with his disciples, from the Last Supper, through to his arrest, suffering, death and resurrection. It is in John's gospel that we find the emphasis on love and loving service, in Jesus' sayings, 'signs' and teaching: 'I give you a new commandment: that you love one another just as I have loved you.'

In this passage

Jesus is asking us to commit to a self-emptying love for one another, just as he has loved us and poured out his life for the world. And when we love as Jesus loves, he calls us his friends, because we are alongside him and know his purpose. His purpose becomes our purpose; his example, our example. We are filled to the brim with his love and sent out to let this great love flow into fruitful self-giving lives of love for others. In marriage, we are called in a particular way to follow Jesus's example of living for the other, always putting their needs before our own, through a life-long, exclusive commitment to one another. It is not selfish or self-seeking but self-emptying, and paradoxically, this way of love is extraordinarily fruitful and leads to happiness and fulfilment, touching the lives of those around us too.

Reflecting on Scripture together

Use the 'Reflecting on Scripture together — a simple way' in the introduction 'Choosing your Wedding readings'.

Further Reflection

Following the 'slow reading' process, here are some questions for further reflection:

- What is it like to be in love? How did you first meet and what was it that attracted you to one another?
- Think of a marriage you admire. What do you think is it that sustains it? Could you have a conversation with that couple about their marriage and what has made it work?
- What is it to be a 'friend' — what would you say are the qualities of a wonderful friendship?
- What are the skills that help you develop your relationship into something strong and lasting?
- What help do you need and from whom?
- What might it mean for you to 'lay down your life' for the one you love? What sort of unselfish small kindnesses can you think of? What are the bigger acts of kindness you can do for one another?
- What do you like about this reading? Why might you choose it for your wedding?