

Week of April 29-May 5

TIMES TWO

Scripture Reading: Read John chapter 15

In elementary school, children are taught their multiplication tables. They begin with the simple ones first and eventually work their way up the number scale. Part of the learning process is to do repetitive problems, going over the tables again and again. The goal of the teacher is to have their students memorize the tables so that they can have instant recall when confronted with a multiplication problem and not have to think about it.

Some students at first don't see the importance of learning the tables. It seems like a waste of time, especially if they can use a calculator instead. As time goes on, however, many of these students slowly begin to realize how much more efficient their fellow students are in math because their friends took the time to memorize their tables.

In today's chapter reading, Jesus goes back over a lesson with his disciples that he had given them previously in chapter 13. In fact, he goes over the same lesson times two. It's obvious that he wants them to get the lesson. In fact, we might say that he wants them to memorize it so that they can recall it at any time and obey it. What is that lesson? "Love one another." In verse 12, Jesus once again declares, "Love each other as I have loved you." In verse 17, he repeats the lesson again, "This is my command: Love each other."

Why is Jesus so intent on his disciples learning their "love tables"? Because, they weren't getting it yet. Remember, the first time Jesus gave this lesson in chapter 13, they had been arguing as to who was to be the greatest in the kingdom. Certainly no love was present there! The discussion was so intense that not one of the disciples was willing to humble himself to wash another disciple's feet. Jesus had to do it to teach them a lesson in humility.

In addition, he was preparing that night to be arrested and, then, crucified the next day. A few short weeks after his resurrection, he was going to return to his Father in heaven and they would be given the task of reaching the world with the gospel. How could they teach and reach with a gospel of love if they couldn't love each other? Such a task would be impossible without unity and love. Indeed, the very act of loving one another as Jesus loved them was to be one of the greatest witnessing tools at their disposal. Jesus had told them if they loved each other like he loved them, then all people would know that they were his disciples (John 13:35). In other words, their ability to learn their "love tables" would serve as a powerful witness for Christ. It's one of the reasons why Jesus gave the lesson times two. "Love one another!"

Action Step: Use a concordance and discover how many times in the New Testament we are commanded to love one another.

Prayer Focus: For the Lord to impress on you the critical need to learn your "love tables" and for grace, wisdom and power to practice a life of love.

Take-away: *Love one another is a lesson worth learning and living!*