

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 15 • Issue 2

THE LOWER LIGHTS

Guidance through the night

Singing in the Train

The crash that changed lives

Known to Him

God's blog





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION BEING A FRIEND

When Jesus told His disciples, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends,"¹ He was literally describing His upcoming death on the cross to save humanity. The subsequent events proved that He was willing to give up everything for us, His friends. Jesus' love is perfect and His

friendship is perfect.

I've sometimes wondered what my actions would be if I were in a situation where I could save a life by giving my own; but of course I know it's not so likely that I'll ever be tested in such a dramatic way. The challenges I'm likely to face are more prosaic, and the opportunities for "laying down my life" that come my way are more mundane.

Do I hang out with my friend who's going through a rough patch and isn't particularly fun to be around at that time, or do I make excuses and try to avoid him? Do I visit my friend when she's sick—not just once at the beginning, but regularly, if needed? If I got a ticket to a big game, but my friend didn't, would I be willing to give it to him? When my friend gets an incredible work or vacation opportunity, am I genuinely happy and excited for her, or am I jealous of her good fortune? When my friends' choices of restaurants or activities are different from what I would have liked, do I always expect them to accommodate my wishes?

Opportunities like these for "unexciting" sacrifices come up on a daily basis and are more valid tests of my character than hypothetical life-and-death drama. I've certainly not arrived yet, and working on this issue of *Activated* has inspired me to try harder to be the kind of friend who, as the Bible says, "loves at all times."²

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. John 15:13 NLT
2. Proverbs 17:17

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REAL FRIENDS

BY THERESA LECLERC

WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER, I thought I knew it all. I was full of insecurities, but I was also full of opinions—strong ones! Looking back, I feel sorry for my parents. I'm sure I wasn't an easy child to raise, especially as a teen. I didn't like the fact that I had stricter parents than some of my friends did, and I pulled away from my mom and dad, as many teens do. I was sure my parents didn't understand me, and I was right—they didn't! None of their other kids were anything like me. I questioned everything and had trouble keeping rules. However, although I was tough on the outside, all I really wanted deep down was to find someone who truly understood me.

One day I found myself at a gathering where I was the only teenager. While the adults talked in

small groups, I sat off in a corner by myself, watching, until a woman named Joy came over and struck up a conversation. Eventually, I opened up and told her about all my troubles. I half expected her to lecture me, but instead she just listened. I could tell that she genuinely cared about getting to know me, and never once did I feel she was putting me in my place or trying to change my opinion; she simply tried to understand me.

That conversation was the beginning of a friendship that continued through thick and thin for seven years, until Joy passed away. We would take long walks together and would sometimes write notes to each other about things that were harder to say in person. Even after she moved to a distant city, we kept in touch by phone and mail. For much

of those seven years, Joy was so sick that she could have died at any time, but I never heard her complain. She was always bubbly and had a passion for people.

Joy taught me something important—that it was okay to be myself. And in the process, she also taught me to try to understand people in a deep way, to look beyond their appearance and sometimes even what they say, to accept them for who they are and show them unconditional love. Though we all seem so different, we're all made from the same stuff, and we all need love, understanding, and acceptance. When someone sees our need and fills it, we blossom.

THERESA LECLERC IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH AFRICA. ■

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED



LOVE

beyond limits

CONSISTENTLY THINKING OF OTHERS AND TRYING TO MEET THEIR NEEDS, especially when that involves personal sacrifice, is a tall order! It's so easy to be lazy, selfish, and self-centered. Most of us are that way naturally. Our first reactions are usually about ourselves—what we want and what will make *us* happy. But with Jesus' help, we can develop new habits and reactions, which with time will help us become more loving and caring individuals.

It's human nature to be self-preserving, self-seeking, self-satisfying, to put our own needs and happiness first. But the Bible promises, "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"¹

1. 2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT

2. John 13:35 NLT

Jesus challenges us to manifest deep, sacrificial, impartial love for others, even though He knows such love is far beyond our human capabilities. But He can help us break those natural circuits and rewire our minds and hearts to do His bidding, which is to love others.

Jesus told His original followers, "Your love ... will prove to the world that you are my disciples."² The love Jesus' disciples had for one another, their friends, and even strangers, drew much attention and was a powerful example to others of God's love.

To become the new creation God wants to make you, it takes a willing mind and heart, a believing spirit, prayer, and following through with many small deeds of unselfish love. Then you will find yourself thinking more of others, feeling their needs more readily, and having more

genuine concern for their happiness and well-being.

When you give of yourself, when you go out of your way to be a friend, when you spend time with someone who's lonely or comfort someone who's sick, when you sympathize and help someone with their problems, when you make someone feel needed, you will find that it brings you a special kind of satisfaction and reward of spirit. Through performing these little acts of love and unselfishness, you will be blessed personally with happiness that can't be gotten any other way—the happiness of knowing that you have been a blessing to someone in need.

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■



THE POETRY OF LOVE

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

—*Proverbs 17:17*

A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

—*Proverbs 18:24*

Love cannot be drowned by oceans or floods; it cannot be bought, no matter what is offered.

—*Song of Solomon 8:7 CEV*

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

—*1 Peter 4:8 NIV*

You show love for others by truly helping them, and not merely by talking about it.

—*1 John 3:18 CEV*

True love ennobles and dignifies the material labors of life; and homely services rendered for love's sake have in them a poetry that is immortal.

—*Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896)*

Love is a consistent passion to give, not a meek persistent hope to receive.

—*Swami Chinmayananda (1916–1993)*

To love is to receive a glimpse of heaven.

—*Karen Sunde (b. 1942)*

Love is just a word until someone comes along and gives it meaning.

—*Author unknown*

Love means to love that which is unlovable; or it is no virtue at all.

—*G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936)*

Loving can cost a lot, but not loving always costs more, and those who fear to love often find that want of love is an emptiness that robs the joy from life.

—*Merle Shain (1935–1989)*

There is no surprise more magical than the surprise of being loved: It is God's finger on man's shoulder.

—*Charles Langbridge Morgan (1894–1958)*

We say that grace is “unmerited favor.” And we are instructed to love as Christ loves us. He shows us grace; we are to show each other grace. That means we are to be kinder to people than what we think they deserve.

—*Author unknown*

Impart unto me, O God, I pray Thee, the spirit of Thy love, that I may be more anxious to give than to receive, more eager to understand than to be understood, more thoughtful for others, more forgetful of myself.

—*Frederick B. Meyer (1847–1929)*

To love for the sake of being loved is human, but to love for the sake of loving is angelic.

—*Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869)*

You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments when you have truly lived are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love.

—*Henry Drummond (1851–1897)* ■



KNOWN TO HIM

BY CHALSEY DOOLEY

I GUESS I'M IN THE SEASON OF LIFE where I'm so occupied living life and keeping up with all my projects and everything I need to do as a mother, caregiver, teacher, and wife that I just can't seem to find the time to write blog posts and letters to friends about myself.

It's not like I never miss it, though. There are times when I just want there to be someone who knows what's going on, who can laugh with me at the funnies, smile at the kids' new accomplishments, give an e-hug and encourage me through the new challenges, someone I can tell the daily struggles and updates to, who is "on the same page" as I am. There's a difference between telling someone who's trying their best to listen—but not really getting it—and someone

who really, really knows exactly what you are feeling and expressing, and what level of importance something you're saying holds in your heart.

Growing up, I never had many friends. My biggest lament as a teen was that I didn't know how to make friends. In a way, I'm glad I got used to being a loner, to the point that now I don't seek out or crave big social events and partying, but in my own way, I enjoy the rich and full life I am blessed to have.

I have the best husband I could have dared to hope for and love being with my children more than doing anything else in the world. I can tell my husband lots—and try to, in the midst of the busy life we both lead. We try to listen, encourage, and be the friend the other

needs. But our areas of expertise, and our focuses, wavelengths, dreams, and all, are different—and need to be, in order to cover everything that needs to be covered in our home and family, making a well-rounded base for our children's growth and care.

Once upon a time, I opened a Facebook account ... but don't bother looking for me! Even if you find me, you'll just be disappointed at my blank, empty space! It was an attempt to hook up with old friends I'd lost contact with during a few years of travel, followed by marriage, beginning a family, and moving to a new country. But instead of feeling a sense of "home" and excitement at reigniting fun, cozy friendships, I had the unexpected reaction of tinges of depression. The glimpses I got of



my friends' lives were like splashes of cold water. They had all moved on and were doing quite fine without me! No matter how close we had been, and all the secrets and dreams, fun times, laughs, and tears we had shared, it was all water under the bridge, as life flowed along.

Thankfully, within the next day or two, unexpected sources of friendship poked their heads up, all at the right time to lift my spirits. A few unexpected emails and phone calls, a couple of visits, and even a handwritten note. Someone “up there” knew, and timed these right. I pulled through and am back to my happy self again. I also rarely—if ever—visit Facebook.

The thing is, I realized that the fact that we're not in touch much doesn't

mean the friendship I had with these people is ended. If any of my seemingly long-gone friends were in need and asked me to help and be there for them, I absolutely would, and I'm pretty sure they feel the same way. I saw I needed to adjust my thinking and not have it so centered on, “A friend is only someone who is always there to listen to me, and makes me feel important to their happiness.” Our friendship is just in a different phase from where it used to be, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Then the most encouraging thought of all came this morning: *God* keeps a blog of my life! Even though I don't have time to write a diary, a blog, or heaps of personal letters with a play-by-play account of my life, He knows it all and is keeping track. My

every move, thought, action, word, decision, tear, smile, emotion, illness, adventure, scrape, thrill, idea, and dream has been and is being recorded. It could be an uncomfortable thought in some cases, I suppose. But today I'm glad for it.

Even if I never get around to writing a book about my life, that's being taken care of. And I have a friend 24/7 to talk with and listen to, who knows how my heart feels every moment of the day. Jesus is the best!

CHALSEY DOOLEY IS A WRITER OF INSPIRATIONAL MATERIAL FOR CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS AND IS A FULL-TIME EDU-MOM LIVING IN AUSTRALIA. CHECK OUT HER WEBSITE AT WWW.NURTURE-INSPIRE-TEACH.COM. ■

1900

1920

1959

1970

BY SCOTT MCGREGOR

SINGING IN THE TRAIN

JACK SANK DEEPER INTO HIS SEAT IN THE COLD TRAIN CARRIAGE and pulled his hat down over his ears. He and his fellow passengers had been stranded there for several hours already. The steam locomotive and the lead carriage of the overnight express train had jumped the tracks halfway between hell and nowhere. Now all they could do was wait until help arrived. It was 1959, the middle of winter, and the dead of night. No power, no heat, and no light except for a few flashlights that the conductor and some passengers had.

Jack knew it was going to take a while before the alarm was raised somewhere up the line when they realized that the express was not on schedule. Search parties would have to be mobilized and sent out

with some caution. A train could be dispatched up the single spur line in the other direction, but that would be risky, as they could find themselves traveling head on into the delayed express traveling from the other direction. The signal system on this part of the track was antiquated, as Jack, a train aficionado, knew. The real search, he concluded, would not begin until dawn.

The train had come to a jerking halt. The steam locomotive and the lead carriage were off the track and had plowed into a thick gravel embankment. Both were upright, and miraculously no one was killed, although the engineer and fireman had sustained nasty head injuries. They had been carried back to one of the carriages to endure the freezing

night with their passengers, several of whom had also been hurt. It was frustrating and scary to know that they were out there with little chance of rescue till daylight.

Then from somewhere in Jack's carriage someone started singing. It was the old World War II Vera Lynn song, "The White Cliffs of Dover." Soon everyone in the carriage joined in. When that one was over, someone started another.

"We sang all night," recalled Jack. "We didn't care what the song was. We sang popular songs, old music hall numbers, hymns, even Christmas carols. As long as we kept singing, it kept our spirits up. People from other carriages came up and we all crowded in to keep warm. Most of us were strangers to one another, but

1980

1985

2000

2005

2014

Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure.—Sirach 6:14

To the world you are just one person, but to one person you could mean the world.—Unknown

we all became comrades in disaster, lifting one another's spirits.

"It was a mixed bunch, from young army recruits returning to camp from leave, to young families and a few old-timers, even some guys I wouldn't normally want to be around on a dark night. But somehow the social barriers all came down. I initially heard one enormous fellow—Clifford was his name, I learned—let off such a stream of cursing when the accident first occurred that it probably equaled all the other swearing and blasphemy that I had heard in my life until then. But he was the fellow that scooped up the engineer in his arms, carried him back to the carriage, and hovered about him like a cross between an angel and a nurse for the rest of the night. If

I've met anyone in my life that was a rough diamond, it was Clifford.

"I've been guilty many times of judging books by their covers, but in this fellow's case I was wrong—and probably have been many other times. It was the most incredible night of my life in many ways, and I made fast friends with many who were there. I was almost sorry when the rescue teams located us early the next morning."

On that miserable night, stranded in the middle of nowhere, Jack and his fellow passengers forged a lifetime of friendships. They decided to have a reunion every year on the date of the accident. Jack went to their weddings and some of their funerals. Clifford became an orderly at a hospital and then joined the Saint

John Ambulance Brigade. Seems he had only been out of jail a few weeks before the wreck and was traveling that night to settle a few scores with some erstwhile "friends." "That wreck stopped me from making a wreck out of my life," he told Jack at one of their reunions several years later.

Jack got on with his life, being my dad amongst other things. It wasn't the most outstanding of lives, some might say, but he gained an outstanding lesson that night that never left him and one he was fond of telling me. Our darkest experiences can sometimes turn out to be our best and can forge the greatest friendships.

SCOTT MCGREGOR IS AN AUTHOR AND COMMENTATOR AND LIVES IN CANADA. ■



The Lower Lights

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED

WHEN MY HUSBAND'S HEALTH WAS DECLINING AND I WAS VISITING HIM AT THE HOSPITAL, I would see other patients in waiting rooms or in their beds and think about what they must be suffering. Some of them, especially the very aged, would be lying there all alone, day after day. I visited the hospital daily for about a month, and no one ever came to see them. No one cared enough to come.

Then I would look out the window of my husband's hospital room, out to the highway where cars were rushing back and forth, and I would think about poor, lost humanity—so many lonely, sorrowful people, so many broken hearts. I realized then how much everyone—whether dying or rushing through life—needed God's love and mercy. I

1. "The Lower Lights," music and lyrics by Philip P. Bliss, 1838–1876

realized, too, how much God needed *us* to point people to His heart of love. It reminded me of this hymn, which I would sometimes sing to my husband, sitting at his bedside:

Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From His lighthouse evermore,
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.

Let the lower lights be burning,
Send a gleam across the wave.
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman,
You may rescue, you may save.

Dark the night of sin has settled,
Loud the angry billows roar;
Eager eyes are watching, longing,
For the lights along the shore.

Trim your feeble lamp, my brother,
Some poor sailor, tempest tossed
Is trying now to make the harbor,
And in darkness may be lost.¹

God, His Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are the upper lights, but we are the lower lights along the shore. God has entrusted us with some sacred responsibilities—things that should have the first priority in our life. Lots of things demand our attention, and there is so little time for them all. If we're not careful, we may put off or miss what is truly important. What a blessing you could be to your family and neighbors—your "neighbor" being anyone God puts in your path who needs His love and your love, anyone He wants to love and help through you.

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG
(1886–1968) WAS AN AMERICAN
EVANGELIST AND PASTOR. ■

It is not so much our friends' help that helps us as the confident knowledge that they will help us.
—Epicurus (341–269 BC)



limitless love

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so I can have eternal life. Please come into my heart, and help me learn more about You and Your Father's love. Amen.

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

THE LORD IS GOOD TO ALL, and his mercy is over all that he has made. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.—*Psalm 145:9,15–16 ESV*

God's love extends to every person. Ever since He created human beings, He has loved them. No matter where they stand relationally with Him, He loves them. They may not believe He exists; they may believe He exists but hate Him; they may want nothing to do with Him; but nevertheless, He loves them. His love, kindness, and care are given to them by virtue of their being part of humanity.

Human beings were created in God's image. He loves every single one of us, and His love for us translates into loving action on His part—His care and blessings given to humankind.

God's love for all humankind is most clearly seen in His answer to our need for salvation. Every person falls short,¹ and that's why we need help in order to be reconciled to God. God, because of His love for each of us, brought forth the plan of salvation by which Jesus came to earth, lived a sinless life, and died, taking our sins upon Himself, thus making amends for us.


God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God showed his great love for us by

sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.—*John 3:16 NLT; Romans 5:8 NLT*

God in His love has made a way that we can avoid the just punishment for our sins and be reconciled to Him in a loving relationship. He sent His Son as a substitute to take that punishment for each of us. He doesn't pour out His judgment and wrath on any of us, because Jesus took it all upon Himself. All that is left is for each of us to believe, and if we do, our sins are forgiven, atoned for. That's God's love, His gift to you and me.

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■

1. See Romans 3:23.



Bucketfuls of Roses

BY PALOMA SRIDHAR

THINGS ARE GOING FROM BAD TO WORSE, Lord, and I think I know why, I thought as I pulled my sunglasses over my eyes and stuffed my hands as far as possible into my pockets. I must have done something really wrong, because I don't think You love me anymore!

Yes, I do, a voice sounded in my heart.

No, I don't think so.

But I do.

Prove it!

All right. What would you like?

The road I was driving on was dry, noisy, and dusty. What was I unlikely to find?

If You show me a red rose, then I will know that You still love me.

Just one? I thought I heard Him laugh. For you, I would give a bucketful of roses!

As I thought about it later, I

realized how foolish my request had been. God doesn't have to prove His love; it's there whether we realize it or not.

That afternoon, I met a friend at her office. While we chatted over coffee, my mind was elsewhere. I had told God that He need not hold me to my word, because I knew that He loved me and would always care for me; but deep down, I still really wanted to see that “proof.” When our conversation came to an end, I got up to leave, and then I saw it: a small clay vase on the corner of the desk held an odd little arrangement of a handful of ferns ... and one red rose!

My heart rejoiced. *Thank You, Jesus!*

Don't thank Me just yet! I seemed to hear Him say. I had something to show you at the corner of the road as you entered your friend's office—only,

you were too busy to see it. Take a look around.

I stepped out of the building and the first thing that caught my eye was not *one*, but *four* buckets full of red roses smiling at me! And besides that, there were shelves of single red roses behind. It was a florist's shop.

On any other day, this sequence of events might have just been a coincidence; but on this occasion, the unexpected appearance of all those roses—coming on the heels of my earlier conversation with God—helped reassure me that He cares about me personally and His love will never fail. He made me and you, and He is also going to make something wonderful out of our lives.

PALOMA SRIDHAR IS A CONTENT WRITER AND EDITOR FOR A WEB DESIGN COMPANY IN MUMBAI, INDIA. ■



MARRIED TO A STAR

BY VICTORIA OLIVETTA

IN THE ROMANTIC MOVIES I WATCHED WHILE GROWING UP, the whole universe seemed to pause when Mr. Right met Miss Right. From then on, apparently the only things they required for survival were doses of staring into each other's eyes and embracing, preferably in some dreamy exotic locale.

Like many others, I believed this was a true picture of falling in love. But real life doesn't work like that. I never found that perfect "Mr. Right"—at least not the Hollywood variety—but I did meet my own movie star.

My husband is not a particularly romantic person. He has never showed up on a white horse with a red rose in hand, declaring that I will be his princess forever; he doesn't pull

me outside to gaze at the full moon together; and he hasn't written me reams of poetry. But he's upheld me through the dark times, remained by me when I've been sick, and survived my mood swings without complaint.

We're different and know that we need each other. When I'm discouraged, my husband prays for me.¹ When I fall asleep on the couch while we're watching TV, he lowers the volume until I wake up and go to bed. If things get rough, we pray together for divine direction. When we arrive at a solution, we thank God together.

As I'm writing this, he's gone out—in the rain—to buy what we need to make lunch.

No, he's not a movie star, but I think he deserves a prize! He is a genuine guy who has proven he'll stay at my side on sunny or rainy days, for better or for worse. He loves God,

me, and our children—and for me, this is the best love story ever told.

Thank God He let Mr. Right come my way. He's the star of my life's movie.

VICTORIA OLIVETTA IS AN ADMINISTRATOR, WRITER, AND FAMILY COUNSELOR IN ARGENTINA. ■

There is no more lovely, friendly, or charming relationship, communion, or company than a good marriage.

—Martin Luther (1483–1546)

A good marriage is one which allows for change and growth in the individuals and in the way they express their love.

—Pearl Buck (1892–1973)

1. See Ecclesiastes 4:9–10.

THE ONE AND ONLY YOU

FOUR TIPS FOR BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

BY GLORIA CRUZ

IT'S DIFFICULT TO “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF”¹ if your own self-esteem is low. God made each of us unique and has endowed us with a distinct balance of strengths and weaknesses. The problem begins when we compare ourselves with other people and their situations, or we measure ourselves by society’s standards of success and eventually find ourselves in a state of constant unhappiness.

If this is how you sometimes feel, consider these suggestions that I have found great self-esteem boosters:

1 ANALYZE YOUR PERSONAL CORE VALUES, AND IF NECESSARY, MAKE CHANGES.

Ask yourself which is more important—your health or your image?

1. Matthew 22:39
2. Psalm 139:14–16 MSG
3. Romans 12:6 NIV
4. Douglas Meador

Making money or having peace of mind? Your work or spending time with your family? And so on. Recognizing what counts the most for you gives you clear targets to aim for.

2 BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE VERY SPECIAL TO GOD.

The Lord knew you even before you were born. “You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; you know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something. Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you, the days of my life all prepared before I’d even lived one day.”²

3 MAKE A LIST OF YOUR STRENGTHS.

What do you like about yourself? Don’t focus on your lacks or weaknesses, but rather on what is good about yourself, your talents, your positive traits. Perhaps you are

creative, kind, cheerful, intelligent, easygoing, generous. While we have to admit our weaknesses in order to keep them under control, it’s also important to recognize our potential. “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.”³

4 BE THANKFUL FOR ALL THE GOOD YOU HAVE.

In whatever situation you find yourself, try to identify something positive to be thankful for, remembering that “trouble is the structural steel that goes into character-building.”⁴

When you learn to understand and take care of your emotional needs you will be able to reach out to others and be a greater positive influence on those around you. The change begins within, as you let God’s light and love into your being and life.

GLORIA CRUZ IS A CHRISTIAN LIFE COACH FOR WOMEN IN SPAIN. ■

QUIET MOMENTS
BY ABI MAY

LEAVING ON

HIM



IT'S DINNER TIME. It's not exactly a party, but it is a special meal. They booked a private room, ordered the food, and now they are sitting around, eating, drinking, talking.

The leader of this disparate group of friends had seemed very eager for the supper—he'd even helped initiate the arrangements. But now he is in a serious mood.

Amid the clatter of plates and cups, he makes a shocking statement: Someone is going to let them down, someone among their number is going to betray them.

Amongst his friends, there's one loud, outspoken fellow who often takes the lead. Like the others, he's astonished to hear this. He really

wants to know who this traitor will be, but he realizes that it probably wouldn't be too smart to shout across the room.

There's another quieter friend. He too is one of the closest friends of their leader. We may wonder why, because he hasn't done anything outstanding. But whenever the leader is doing something important, there he is at his side. And tonight, at this important meal, he's sitting close to the leader, so close that his head is almost on his shoulder.

The louder fellow motions to him. The message is clear: "Find out who this traitor is."

The quiet one whispers a question to the leader. He replies in a soft voice. Nobody else in that busy room could make sense of the reply. Nobody else was close enough to get the message.

It is only in sitting quietly at our Savior's side that we hear His voice.

It is only in leaning quietly upon Him that we receive the answers we seek. He promises, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."¹

In the account of the Last Supper,² we read that "the disciple whom Jesus loved was reclining next to him."³

John's closeness to Jesus is also evident on other occasions. John was among the faithful few who were present as Jesus died on the cross.⁴ Then when a distant figure appeared on the beach, inviting the disciples to leave their fishing boat and join him, it was John who first recognized the risen Savior, exclaiming, "It is the Lord!"⁵

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1. James 4:8

2. See John 13:21–29.

3. John 13:23 NIV

4. See John 19:25–27.

5. John 21:7



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

THE GIFT OF GREATER LOVE

Love for others is a part of My divine nature, and when you receive Me, it becomes a part of yours too. Even though it is freely yours, you are still responsible to put it into practice and apply it. How? One step at a time, with one loving deed, followed by another, followed by another.

You can show My love to others in many ways—through forgiveness, mercy, kindness, thoughtfulness, concern, understanding, words of love, words of encouragement, words of praise, taking time to talk, taking time to listen, sympathizing, sharing the

load, and giving of yourself even when it's least expected or least deserved.

Every time you are concerned for others and translate that concern into loving action, you become a little more like Me. Every time you share My love, love will come back to you. As you give more love, I will more than match you; I will pour My love into you in greater measure so that you have more to enjoy and more to share. “Give, and it will be given to you.”¹ That's My plan for giving—the more you give, the more you will receive.

1. Luke 6:38