

LEAD! B.4 From Folly to Love

In Which We Are Rescued from Our Folly by God's Love



Love is the primary virtue of the Heart. It is both a Decision that gives rise to Emotions, as well an Emotion that gives rise to Decisions -- and it needs both to thrive. It can be defined as "*the ability to pursue another's glory -- even at the cost of your own.*"

Love is particularly needed by the Fool, whose emotional damage drives a cycle of self-punishment disguised as the pursuit of pleasure. The only way out is to purify our hearts by receiving God's love and forgiveness, to the point where we love Him more than the false gods we've served -- and discover what it means to *genuinely* love ourselves...

Assigned Reading

1. [Peter Kreeft: *Back to Virtue*](#)
 - 5.C (Love) The Three Theological Virtues
2. Dick Hockett: *Foundations of Wisdom*
 - 6. The Fool
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Admonition

Read [Proverbs 26](#). Why is Folly so dishonorable? How should we respond to it?

Bible

[John 13](#)

We begin our study in [the upper room](#), the night before Jesus is crucified:

[13:1](#) Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus [knew](#) that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the [Father](#), having [loved](#) His [own](#) who were in the [world](#), He loved them to the [end](#).

It is difficult for us to imagine how much the disciples loved Jesus, after spending three years in his presence, hearing His teaching and seeing His miracles; how much harder to imagine the way Jesus loved them!

Especially considering that not all were what we would consider worthy of receiving that love [C.1], as He well knew (cf. [John 6:70](#)):

[2](#) And supper being ended, the [devil](#) having already put it into the [heart](#) of Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son], to [betray](#) Him,

We don't know exactly how, when, or why Judas started to doubt Jesus. We do know that Judas had issues with stealing (cf. [John 12:6](#)), which suggests he was already in the grip of some addiction -- either to money itself, or to something bought with money; the hallmark of a Fool. [C.2]

Yet Jesus isn't focused on the disciples as much as He is on His Father:

³Jesus, knowing that the Father had [given](#) all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,

This is the first and most essential truth about Christian love ([agape](#)): it is rooted in the [character](#) ([name](#)) of God our [Father](#), not in any manifest worthiness of the beloved. For it is only as we trust that God is good -- and loves us -- that we are free to lay aside our own glory in order to serve others:

⁴rose from supper and [laid aside](#) His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

[C.3]

This is the literal enactment of what Paul describes in [Philippians 2:7](#) as "taking on the form of a servant"

⁵After that, He poured water into a basin and began to [wash](#) the disciples' feet, and to wipe [them] with the towel with which He was girded.

This is the second essential truth about Christian love: it is not about dramatic acts that build up our own ego (cf. [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#)), but doing whatever it takes to address the *needs* of the beloved. [C.4]

Not just simply doing what they *want*:

⁶Then He came to Simon Peter. And [Peter] said to Him, "[Lord](#), are You washing my feet?"

Though Peter said it out loud, all the disciples surely shared his reaction, as foot-washing was a menial duty typically performed by the humblest of servants!

Not that Jesus is surprised at their consternation:

⁷Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not [understand](#) now, but you will [know](#) after this."

Peter, impatient as always, can't imagine this ever making sense:

⁸Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

A shocking answer -- so much so that Peter goes to the other extreme:

⁹Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also [my] hands and [my] head!"

It is surely a sign of the perfect patience of Jesus that He doesn't slap Peter upside the head, but instead simply replies:

¹⁰Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash [his] feet, but is completely [clean](#); and you are clean, but not all of you."

¹¹For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

This is a crucial lesson for the Fool. For what we might call "ordinary" sins, it is enough to simply repent and ask for forgiveness as part of our daily walk with God. But true folly (i.e., addiction) doesn't respond to such measures; it requires a top-to-bottom transformation of the heart (see "[Celebrate Recovery](#)", below). [C.5]

Either way, it is only when we allow Jesus to cleanse us that we are able to follow in His footsteps...

¹²So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"

¹³You call Me [Teacher](#) and Lord, and you say well, for [so] I am. ¹⁴If I then, [your] Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

... and understand what it truly means to be great in the kingdom of heaven (cf. [Matthew 18:1-4](#)):

¹⁶Most assuredly, I say to you, a [servant](#) is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

¹⁷If you know these things, [blessed](#) are you if you [do](#) them.

Alas, it is possible to know the truth but not do it. As Judas -- and fools in general -- know all too well:

¹⁸"I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have [chosen](#); but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.'

...

²¹When Jesus had said these things, He was [troubled](#) in spirit, and [testified](#) and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

...

[26](#) Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped [it]." And having dipped the bread, He gave [it] to Judas Iscariot, [the son] of Simon.

[27](#) Now after the piece of bread, [Satan](#) entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

...

[30](#) Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

Some have questioned why -- or even whether! -- Judas was guilty of sin, since Jesus appears to be commissioning (or at least condoning) his act of betrayal.

The painful truth is that some sins, at least for some people in some circumstances, are pretty much inevitable. Rather than trying to forcibly prevent them from sinning, it may be wiser to preserve the relationship and explicitly allow them to experience the full wretchedness of their folly, that they may voluntarily turn and repent (cf. the prodigal son, in [Luke 15:11-32](#)).

In other words, sometimes the greatest act of love is simply [letting go](#).

In this view, the reason Judas stands condemned is **not** the fact that he betrayed Jesus (since arguably *all* the disciples did, to a greater or lesser extent), but rather that he didn't come back to Jesus for forgiveness (cf. [Matthew 27:3-10](#)).

For there is no sin incapable of being forgiven, **if** we are willing to humble ourselves and repent. [C.6] For wherever sin abounds, God's glory is waiting to be revealed (cf. [Romans 5:20-21](#)):

[31](#) So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is [glorified](#), and God is glorified in Him. [32](#) If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.

In particular, Jesus uses this final opportunity to share with us the fulness of His glory, His greatest attribute:

[33](#) Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot [come](#),' so now I say to you.

Which is to say, love:

[34](#) A new [commandment](#) I give to you, that you love [one another](#); as I have loved you, that you also love one another. [35](#) By this all will know that you are

My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The love Christians manifest for each other has long been the most compelling argument for Christianity; conversely, our [failure](#) to consistently love each other has been the severest argument against it. [C.7]

This is the the third and final truth about Christian love in this passage: we can never truly love each other -- much less the world -- in our own strength.

And thus if we are foolish enough to trust in our own virtue, we will end up sorely disappointed:

[36](#) Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot [follow](#) Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward."

[37](#) Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my [life](#) for Your sake."

[38](#) Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have [denied](#) Me three times.

This brings us face to face with Pride, the deadliest of the [seven deadly sins](#), which we will be studying next. May God grant us sufficient love -- love *from* Him, and love *for* Him -- to save us from the folly of pride.

Conversation

1. Do you know someone that seems impossible to love? Can you believe that God loves them as much as He loves you?
2. How would you characterize the relationship between "addiction" and "folly"?
3. Share a time someone showed you sacrificial love.
4. Have you ever done something that *looked* loving, but was actually selfish?
5. What "[besetting sins](#)" (cf. [Hebrews 12:1](#)) do you continue struggle with, even after repeated confession and repentance?
6. When has God forgiven you for something that seemed unforgivable?
7. Where have you been wounded by unloving behavior from Christians?

Decision

- **Repentance:** Where are you addicted to something other than God's love? What might it take for God to transform your heart?
- **Action:** Whom can you serve the way Christ served His disciples?
- **Worship:** How much love did Jesus have for Peter? For Judas? For you?

Explore More

- [Love - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

- [The Question of God . Four Loves | PBS](#)
- [The Judas Chromosome \(Matthew 26:14–27.10\)](#)
- [John 13–17: Foot Washing](#)
- [The Perfect Servant \(John 13:4–5; Philippians 2:6–8\)](#)
- [About | Celebrate Recovery](#)
- [YouTube – "Jesus Loves Me" By The Gaither Vocal Band](#)

For Next Week

For next week, read [1 Peter 5](#). Why is humility essential to the Christian life?

Bonus reading: review the [Beatitudes \(Matthew 5:1–12\)](#), which will be our template for combatting the [Seven Deadly Sins](#).

References

1. **Blue Letter Bible**. "[John 13](#) – New King James Version." Blue Letter Bible. 1996–2009. 08 Jan 2009. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?t=NKJV&b=Jhn&c=13> >
2. **New King James Version (NKJV)** Copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)

